

ED COMMITTEE #2  
March 15, 2007  
**Worksession**

**MEMORANDUM**

March 13, 2007

TO: Education Committee

FROM: Essie McGuire, Legislative Analyst *EMG*

SUBJECT: **Worksession – Special Education Services**

Today the Education Committee will hold a worksession to discuss Special Education Services within the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The following individuals will participate in this discussion:

- Dr. Carol Ann Baglin, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Special Education, Maryland State Department of Education
- Dr. Carey Wright, Associate Superintendent, Office of Special Education and Student Services
- Diane Dickson, Co-Chair, Special Education Subcommittee, MCCPTA
- Marcie Roth, MCNeeds

**The purpose of this meeting is for the Committee to:**

- Review the legal context for Special Education services, including mandates and requirements at the Federal and State levels;
- Receive a programmatic overview of the current array of MCPS Special Education services;
- Understand proposed changes to certain Special Education services, Hours-Based Staffing and the Secondary Learning Centers (SLC);
- Understand the budget implications for FY08 of these proposed changes; and
- Identify specific questions and issues regarding this proposal to address during upcoming budget discussions.

**CONTEXT: COUNCIL ROLE AND JURISDICTION**

State law delineates the roles of the Board of Education, County Executive, and County Council regarding the school system. Although State law gives the Board control of “educational matters” and responsibility for “educational policy”, it gives the Council overall control of spending for the school system.

State law requires the Board to submit to the Executive a proposed budget that allocates funds within 14 major categories. The Executive must submit a proposed budget for the school system to the Council. The Executive's budget may deny or reduce funds allocated by the Board to a major category. The Council may restore any reductions that the Executive makes to the Board's proposed budget and may deny or reduce funds allocated to a major category. The Council also has authority to impose reasonable conditions on the use of funds if the conditions do not intrude into the Board's responsibility for setting educational policy. State law makes it clear that the Council may request information from the Board regarding the program implications of any reduction or increase to the school system's annual budget.

State law is silent as to whether the Council has authority to add funds to the Board's proposed budget. In the past, when the Council desired to add funds to the Board's budget, the Council would typically give the Board an opportunity to approve the additional funds before the Council adopted the school system's final budget.

After the Council adopts the school system's final budget, State law prohibits the Board from moving funds between major categories without Council approval. However, the Board may transfer funds within a major category without Council approval if the Board notifies the Council of the transfer within 15 days after the end of the month in which the transfer is made.

Most program issues have both educational policy and funding implications, although some fall predominantly to one side or the other. **The Board's budget for Special Education in general and the proposed changes for FY08 in particular primarily reflect a realignment of resources to achieve policy and programmatic goals.** When evaluating these aspects of the Board's FY08 budget, the Council must be cognizant of the Board's authority with regard to educational matters and educational policy.

#### **PARENT INPUT**

As Committee members are aware, parents and advocates have provided significant amounts of communication to the Council in support of the learning centers and opposing the proposed closure. This communication has included extensive detail and questions regarding their concerns. Two parents are present today to share their perspective with the Committee: Diane Dickson, Co-Chair, Special Education Subcommittee, MCCPTA, and Marcie Roth, with the parent advocacy group MCNeeds.

Committee Chair Knapp met with parents and advocates in an open forum on Tuesday, March 6, to provide an opportunity for them to share their concerns in person. Council staff has compiled and summarized the comments and questions from this meeting. **This summary (attached as circles 1-4) reflects comments and concerns as presented by the participants.**

The MCCPTA voted in January that it does not favor the revised proposal for realignment of special education services, including phase-out of the learning centers. The MCCPTA letter to Board of Education President Nancy Navarro, a resolution in support of a full continuum of special education services, and the MCCPTA budget testimony which addresses this issue are attached at circles 84-87.

#### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

There are three major legal mandates for MCPS' Special Education Services:

- 1) Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004)
- 2) No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)
- 3) The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).

These mandates are described in the MCPS operating budget description as follows:

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) mandates a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that will meet the student's needs. IDEA also mandates that to the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities must be educated with children without disabilities. Removal from the classroom is to occur only when education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aides and services cannot be achieved. The law also ensures that a disabled child is educated in the school he or she would attend if not disabled unless his or her IEP requires some other arrangement.
- The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates that state, district, and local schools be accountable to the federal requirements and guidelines for academic standards and testing programs. The standards, testing, and accountability provisions are the core of this law. Local schools are mandated to focus instruction where it is most needed and address achievement gaps for the benefit of all students.
- The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) mandates standards for the completion of a special education program with a Maryland high school certificate for those students with disabilities who cannot meet the requirements for a diploma. This includes enrollment in an education program until age 21, if needed, to develop appropriate skills to enter the world of work as a responsible citizen. COMAR also mandates the timeline for completion of assessments, identification of a disability, and placement in a special education program.

Circle 73 details the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, in which special education decisions are made for each student by a team of individuals including teachers and parents. MCPS is legally required to meet the service conditions and needs in an IEP. According to MCPS, program and placement decisions are driven by the service needs of an individual student's IEP plan; they are not location specific.

The Superintendent's memorandum regarding the revised learning center proposal cites two primary mandates within IDEA as the impetus behind the changes.

***Least Restrictive Environment:*** The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirement is a major component of the IDEA. The Superintendent's memorandum on circle 34 outlines the Federal findings regarding Maryland's poor compliance with LRE mandates and MCPS' similarly poor performance in providing inclusive special education.

Circles 6-7 discuss the State LRE targets developed in response to Federal requirements. The primary goal is to decrease each year the number of students in separate classrooms more than 60 percent of the day (LRE C) and increase each year the number of students in separate classrooms less than 21 percent of the day (LRE A). The MCPS performance compared with State targets through 2009 is shown on circle 7.

Dr. Baglin will provide additional detail on the monitoring process, the LRE requirements, and on how the specific targets were determined.

***Disproportionality:*** The Superintendent's memorandum on circles 31-32 outlines the Federal findings regarding Maryland's poor compliance with mandates to prevent students of particular races and ethnicities from being disproportionately placed in self-contained or restrictive settings. As a result of the degree of over-representation of minorities in restrictive settings and other areas, the State required MCPS to reserve nearly \$4 million in Federal funds specifically to address this issue and to review all practices and policies that contributed to disproportionality.

#### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

MCPS provided the tables on circles 74-83 that list all Special Education programs in MCPS, including a description of the services, what students they serve, and the location of the services. It also indicates the staffing patterns for each service. This table clearly illustrates the large number of programs within MCPS and the wide range of needs they address.

The majority of special education students are served by the Resource Services and the Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD) services, both of which are offered in every middle and high school. (Elementary LAD programs are at designated sites in each cluster). **According to the figures in the FY08 Program Budget, these two programs currently serve over 10,000 children.** Speech and Language services are provided to 9,970 children.

**The Program Budget lists the Elementary Learning Centers as currently serving 356 children, and the Secondary Learning Centers with 339 children.** Many of the programs listed are separate special education day schools, such as Mark Twain or Stephen Knolls, which serve relatively small numbers of students.

***Shift in service delivery model:*** In conversations with Council staff, MCPS staff discussed the need for an overall shift in service delivery to both respond to the mandates outlined above and to emphasize educational content and rigorous curriculum. MCPS staff indicated that the large array of separate services and individual programs is unusual among school systems, and that in many cases the services that will meet IEP requirements can be delivered in the home schools.

The proposal to phase-out the learning centers is one component of this approach to decentralize service delivery. Council staff understands also that the hours-based staffing model is an important support in this effort to increasingly return services to home schools.

**In Council staff's view, it is important to understand these proposals in their policy context. Although the focus has been on the specific FY08 proposed changes, it appears that they are steps within a larger realignment and part of a fundamental change in approach. The Committee may want MCPS to elaborate on how the FY08 proposals relate to the legal mandates and what the community can expect in the future.**

#### **FY08 PROPOSALS**

The Board's FY08 budget request includes significant changes to two related programs.

##### **Hours-Based Staffing**

Circle 72 provides an overview of the hours-based staffing model, which allocates special education resources among schools according to the hours required by the children at each school. The purpose is to more accurately and efficiently target special education resources to fill each child's IEP requirements. The FY08 proposal would implement hours-based staffing at 10 new middle schools; two middle schools already receive hours-based staffing and will continue to do so.

**There appears to be consensus in support of the hours-based staffing model.** The concerns that the Council has heard to date have been that the budget request does not include enough hours-based staffing and that the implementation of the new model has been too slow.

##### **Secondary Learning Centers**

Circles 37-39 detail the revised proposal regarding secondary learning centers. Superintendent Weast originally proposed a three-year phase out of the SLC's beginning in FY08. In January, he put forward a revised proposal for a six-year phase out that allows currently enrolled learning center students to complete their education in that setting, if appropriate, but would not allow any new students to enter the SLC's.

As discussed above, it is MCPS' view that the service needs currently addressed within learning centers can also be addressed in home schools by properly realigning service delivery. As the illustration on circle 21 indicates, MCPS intends for this continuum to include self-contained classes where necessary, in home schools rather than a centralized setting. Circle 8 outlines the types of services found in learning centers, and indicates that many aspects of these services can be supported through the Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD) and Resource supports.

### **FY08 Budget Request**

It is helpful to look at the budget request for these two efforts together. Budget charts on circles 68-71 detail the changes between the original and revised proposals and the current hours-based staffing projection.

**The original proposal was budget neutral.** Council staff understands from MCPS that this was intentional, and that shifting the resources from the learning centers would have allowed hours-based staffing at the total of 10 new schools without the need to request additional resources. In addition, MCPS staff states that 10 schools was determined to be practical to accomplish the implementation in the new school year.

The decision to return most of the learning center resources required additional funds, as approved by the Board of Education in its budget amendments. The costs of the components of the revised proposal are:

Grades 7-12 learning centers	\$1,592,049
Hours-based staffing at 10 new schools	\$2,261,185
Additional staff development	\$ 217,980

These three components total \$4.1 million. **However, the total net increase requested for FY08 is \$2.125 million and 31.5 positions.** Since the original proposal was a budget neutral realignment, the primary additional cost to restore the learning center staffing is essentially equal to the cost of the hours-based staffing. Circles 68-69 respond to additional questions about the funding.

**Council staff notes that many aspects of this proposal, including staff development, supports in the home schools, and improvements to learning centers, rely on realignment of current staff and resources. The overarching question becomes whether existing staff and resources can both maintain their current responsibilities and fully address the new inclusion efforts.** For the next six years, MCPS intends to both maintain learning centers and increase supports for inclusion primarily with existing resources, albeit for relatively small numbers of children. Are there costs in terms of other efforts and responsibilities that will not be addressed? Will additional resources be required in the future if realignment proves untenable or as more students are incorporated each year?

Some additional discussion issues and questions regarding implementation and funding are highlighted as follows:

- ***Rising Grade 6 students:*** MCPS states that there would be no additional cost to allow rising 6<sup>th</sup> grade students into the learning centers. The revised proposal calls for a total of 7.5 positions and \$367,680 to be realigned from the learning centers to support the students in the LAD program (circle 70); MCPS states that these staff would remain in the learning centers to support the students there under that scenario.
- ***Additional hours-based staffing:*** MCPS estimates an additional cost of approximately \$3.7 million to provide hours-based staffing at the 15 schools which would receive students currently in an Elementary Learning Center and which are not currently identified for hours-based staffing.
- ***Staff development and training:*** The revised proposal includes \$217,980 for three days of mandatory professional development for teachers at all middle schools. This training was not part of the original proposal; MCPS stated that it was added to respond to concerns of parents regarding the inclusion effort.

In addition to this overarching training, MCPS staff discusses (circle 68) school-specific, on-site training that will be relevant to the individual needs of the students at each school. MCPS explained that there is not an FY08 cost increase associated with this more specific training as it will be accomplished with existing staff, using both County funds and IDEA resources.

- ***Facility capacity:*** Are there space and facility implications for the home schools if separate, self-contained environments are required for students that were not previously available?
- ***Improvements to Learning Centers:*** The revised proposal calls for additional supports to improve the educational experience at the learning centers for their remaining years. Circle 22 highlights these; again, MCPS indicates that no new resources are necessary as they will be the focus of existing staff.
- ***Communication and implementation:*** How will MCPS work with parents and children as the process continues? How are the rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders being prepared for the new experience in their home schools? Does MCPS plan any further communication or outreach with parents and students prior to and during the coming school year?
- ***Other budget realignments:*** For budget discussions, the Committee will need more information regarding other special education services. For example, the budget document references several realignments including Mark Twain School and the closure of one GT/LD site and the Kingsley Wilderness Center. MCPS reports that these changes are due to low enrollment, also a result of including children in more content based programs in their home school environments.

#### **FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING**

As indicated in the presentation (circles 25-26), MCPS intends to monitor the students affected by this proposal, including 30 day reviews, to ensure successful service delivery. In addition, the Board of Education has requested periodic updates as the plan moves forward this coming year.

**Council staff recommends that the Council receive copies of all reports given to the Board of Education regarding student progress this year and any changes required to the service delivery in future years.** This will be an important area to monitor during the coming year in case any additional resources are required in the future years of implementation and phase-out.

**In addition, the Committee may want MCPS to more fully explain how it intends to monitor children's progress.** In addition to the clearly identified 45 students rising from Elementary Learning Centers, how will MCPS track the success of all students who may have entered the learning centers at a later point in their schooling?



**Summary of Comments and Questions**  
**Community meeting with Councilmember Michael Knapp**  
**regarding Special Education Services**  
**March 6, 10:30 am**

More than 50 parents and concerned community members were in attendance, as well as staff from several Councilmember offices.

**Highlights of Comments and Concerns**

Councilmember Knapp opened the meeting by welcoming participants and thanking them for their advocacy. Mr. Knapp discussed his intent for the Committee to learn about the requirements and mandates regarding Special Education, and to focus on what is effective in meeting those mandates. Discussed the differing roles of the Council and the Board of Education; that the Council is the responsible fiscal authority and that the Board has authority for educational policy.

Participants began by requesting parent representation on the panel that will speak to the Education Committee on March 15. Discussed expanding invitation beyond MCCPTA to include MCNeeds as well. All participants voiced their support for the learning center program and detailed the benefits their families had experienced as a result.

**This summary reflects comments and concerns as presented by the participants. Their specific concerns as listed below are grouped within the themes and issues that emerged in the meeting.**

**Families of different socioeconomic means**

Parents have different abilities to access independent assessments and services at all points in the process. This can result in build-up of problems over time that are not addressed early. Can also result in different outcomes and placements for children.

Proposed plan will primarily affect parents without means and the ability to access outside resources.

Many noted that the representation in the room was primarily non-minority and higher income parents.

**Concerns regarding ability of General Education setting to accommodate all children with special needs**

Inclusion will require immense coordination to communicate needs and adequate supports to all teachers, in all sections, in all schools, at all grade levels. Concerns regarding whether MCPS is prepared to fully achieve this coordination for every student. One parent gave the example of an accommodation that was not communicated to a child's math teacher for a child already with an inclusion plan.

Training and support for General Education classrooms appears insufficient to address the full range of needs that will be introduced into setting. Existing models at

Silver Spring International Middle School were introduced with significantly more time and planning prior to implementation.

Inclusion should be more expensive, not less, as more resources are required in more places and for each child individually rather than together.

It will be important to track and monitor children's progress with new services. This will be difficult with children in more locations. Also important to track not only children known in current ES learning centers, but all children who might have entered secondary learning centers at a later point. How will the success of all children be tracked in the absence of the secondary learning centers as a resource.

Children in learning centers and with special needs generally have a wide range of needs, and cannot all be treated in the same manner or placed in the same environments. Many concerns regarding how inclusion will work for children with sensory issues.

A seat in a class is not the same as an appropriate education, and supports must provide assistance and education beyond merely allowing a child to be in a General Education classroom.

#### Agenda of senior administration

There is a plan within MCPS to reduce overall special programs for children with special needs.

One reason to eliminate learning centers is to dilute poor performance statistics.

#### Learning Center quality

There is a range of quality and resources among current learning centers.

#### Hours-Based-Staffing

Concerns regarding how hours based staffing will be allocated, whether it will be allocated according to the children who need additional services coming from learning centers or whether it will be designated for schools with poor performance overall. Concerns also that the hours-based staffing plan is being implemented too slowly.

If hours-based staffing is a primary support for the learning center children, it should be increased. There is insufficient hours-based staffing planned to meet the increased needs of middle schools who will be receiving the learning center students, as the original proposal was for their needs without the learning center students.

There appears to be a discrepancy between how the hours-based staffing model was funded at the two initial sites and the 10 proposed for FY08; it appears that the funds were more for the initial sites.

#### Testing issues

The children with special needs who benefit from learning centers do not fit the testing model; therefore decisions should not be made about them, their progress, performance, or placements based on testing alone.

The County should stand up to the requirements of No Child Left Behind and refuse to incorporate and enforce standards which are inappropriate.

Tests do not measure many of the skills that these children possess and that will be required in life.

### GT/LD program

Concerns regarding the closure of this program. Although MCPS indicates that the program is under-enrolled, parents feel that they have difficulty getting their children placed in the program even when they feel it is appropriate; many seek legal counsel to obtain services.

### Long-term impact

There are costs of not addressing children's needs in the school years, costs to the families, children, and society when children cannot be fully contributing members. These long-term costs and impacts should be considered in making programmatic and fiscal decisions.

### MCPS process

MCPS made its programmatic decision without communication or explanation, and without involving parents in a decision-making process.

Special Education advisory committees were not aware of or involved with the decision-making process.

The Board of Education made its decision without fully taking parents' views into account, in spite of significant communication and advocacy.

MCPS spends tax resources on legal fees to fight parents rather than focusing on service delivery and coordination with parents.

There is a lack of trust between parents and MCPS.

### Community impact

The MCPS decision to eliminate the learning centers disbands several support communities that exist within and around the learning centers: for children, for teachers, and for parents as supports and advocates. This impacts the educational experience as well as the support network for all involved.

### Follow-up, monitoring

How can the Council help build bridges between parents and MCPS, improve communication and trust.

Discussion regarding Council oversight and staffing.

Council should track outcomes, require an independent audit of children's progress without learning center resource. Council should also track how many learning center children are placed into non-diploma programs.

Council should request a moratorium on the proposed changes, and appoint a task group to review process, study options, make recommendations.

### Specific Questions

In addition to the comments above, participants raised the following specific questions regarding the proposed changes to special education services.

What will happen if children don't succeed in their new environments?

How will MCPS monitor all children, including those not in learning centers now who may otherwise have entered the secondary learning centers at a later date?

How will the plan provide for IEP staffing, including service coordination and meetings involving children, teachers, parents?

How is MCPS reallocating the \$1 million saved from out-of-county placements?

Given the persistent vacancies in Special Education teachers, how will MCPS recruit and obtain additional teachers required for this effort?

How does this plan meet Federal requirements for a continuum of services, options, and placements?

What improvements will occur to the learning centers for the remaining time? How will this be documented?

How are 5<sup>th</sup> graders being prepared now for their new experience next year?

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 16

QUESTION:

What is the research and legal aspects that provide the underlying basis for the MCPS recommendation to moving more students to more inclusive settings? What is the trend for jurisdictions both regionally and nationally?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: NA

ANSWER:

The No Child Left Behind Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 mandate that students with disabilities be able to access the general education curriculum, classrooms, and accountability systems. These mandates are supported by two decades of education research that identify the benefits of educating students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers. As referenced in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1997, "Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by...providing appropriate special education and related services and aids and supports in the regular classroom to such children..."

A recent educational policy briefing from the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community notes that, across the country, students with disabilities have made progress on state assessments. The report includes information from a 2001 survey of state directors of special education. Two thirds of the states reported stable or increased performance levels of students with disabilities on state tests. Overall, states listed positive consequences of inclusive standards, assessments, and accountability.

In 2001, the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, cited the State of Maryland for noncompliance with the least restrictive environment mandates in IDEA. As a result, Maryland was placed under focused monitoring and required to set targets for school districts to increase student access to the general education environment. Maryland established the goal of having 80 percent of students with disabilities in the general education environment at least 40 percent of the time. As a result, all jurisdictions in Maryland began realigning service delivery models. According to the October 28, 2005, Maryland Census Data Report, Montgomery County Public Schools ranks 21 of 24 jurisdictions with regard to this goal.

FY 2007 QUESTION NUMBER: 42

QUESTION:

Provide documentation that shows that MCPS is legally required to meet an 80 percent inclusion rate for special education students.

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: E - 8

ANSWER:

According to Dr. Carol Ann Baglin, assistant state superintendent, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education, new reporting requirements, as specified in the State Performance Plan (SPP) and required by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) took effect with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA). Federal regulations now require (beginning in the 2005-2006 school year) each state to establish measurable and rigorous targets for the indicators established by OSEP under the priority areas, including least restrictive environment (LRE [34 CFR 300.600(d)], [34 CFR 300.601(a)]. MSDE must set academic performance standards, ensure that schools and students have sufficient resources to meet those standards, and hold schools and local systems accountable for student performance.

In the past, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) was required to work towards the goal of having 80 percent of students with disabilities in the general education setting (LRE A + LRE B). The targets for LRE are now measured differently because of changes under IDEA. MSDE established targets for LRE in accordance with the priority areas described in 34 CFR 300.600(d). Now, the MSDE targets are to increase LRE A (general education) and decrease LRE C (self-contained classrooms) each year. For FY 2006, the LRE A target was 57.75 percent and LRE C target was 17.47 percent. Although not specifically targeted, it is assumed that LRE B will increase over time as students transition out of LRE C into less restrictive settings, either LRE A or LRE B.

The monitoring priority area is to provide a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the LRE and sets measurable and rigorous targets for implementation (SPP, p.34). The targets for LRE increase yearly. The targets set for the 2005-2006 school year are indicated below.

<b>Inclusion Indicator</b>	<b>MSDE Targets FY 2006</b>	<b>MCPS as of October 2005</b>
LRE A (removed from regular class less than 21% of the day)	57.75%	57.05%
LRE C (removed from regular class greater than 60% of the day)	17.47%	20.66%

MCPS has not reached the LRE A or LRE C target.

The following state targets are set for FY 2007 through FY 2009.

<b>Inclusion Indicator</b>	<b>FY 2007*</b>	<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>FY 2009</b>
LRE A	58.25%	58.75%	59.25%
LRE C	17.22%	16.97%	16.72%

Secondary schools with learning centers contribute to the overall MCPS LRE C. Below is the percentage of students with disabilities in the most restrictive environments within schools with secondary learning centers.

<b>FY 2006–2007</b>				
<b>School Name</b>	<b>School Population</b>	<b>Special Education Students Total</b>	<b>Students with Disabilities in General Education &lt;40% of the Day (LRE C) —State target is 17.22 % for 2006–2007</b>	
			<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Dr. M.L. King , Jr. MS	741	120	31	26%
Col. E. Brooke Lee MS	513	126	41	33%
White Oak MS	811	137	70	51%
Montgomery Village MS	749	184	96	52%
Tilden MS	770	191	104	54%
Walter Johnson HS	1,967	272	106	39%
Watkins Mill HS	1,777	273	124	45%
John F. Kennedy HS	1,495	224	120	54%

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 47

QUESTION:

Provide a description of the continuum of placement options for students that would typically be placed in secondary learning centers.

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: NA

ANSWER:

The superintendent of schools has announced a revised special education proposal that would allow all special education students in grades 6 through 12 who are currently in secondary learning centers to remain there through graduation. The revised proposal phases out learning centers over a six-year period, but continues the effort to include more special education students in general education classes.

The Secondary Learning Centers provide comprehensive special education instruction and related services to students with multiple needs and various disabilities. Special education provided by the learning center is not a location but an array of services. Students are served in a combination of self-contained and co-taught classes, as well as provided opportunities to be fully included with nondisabled peers.

Students in a secondary learning center are supported through a team approach. Some of the strategies used to support students include:

- Use of assistive technology
- Multisensory instruction
- Adjusted pacing of instruction
- Curriculum adaptations

Most students that receive special education services in their home schools will access general education classes and will receive supportive services from staff that is allocated to the school as Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD) and Resource support. The LAD program offers a continuum of services, including a combination of self-contained, co-taught classes, supported classes, and opportunities for students to be fully included with their nondisabled peers.

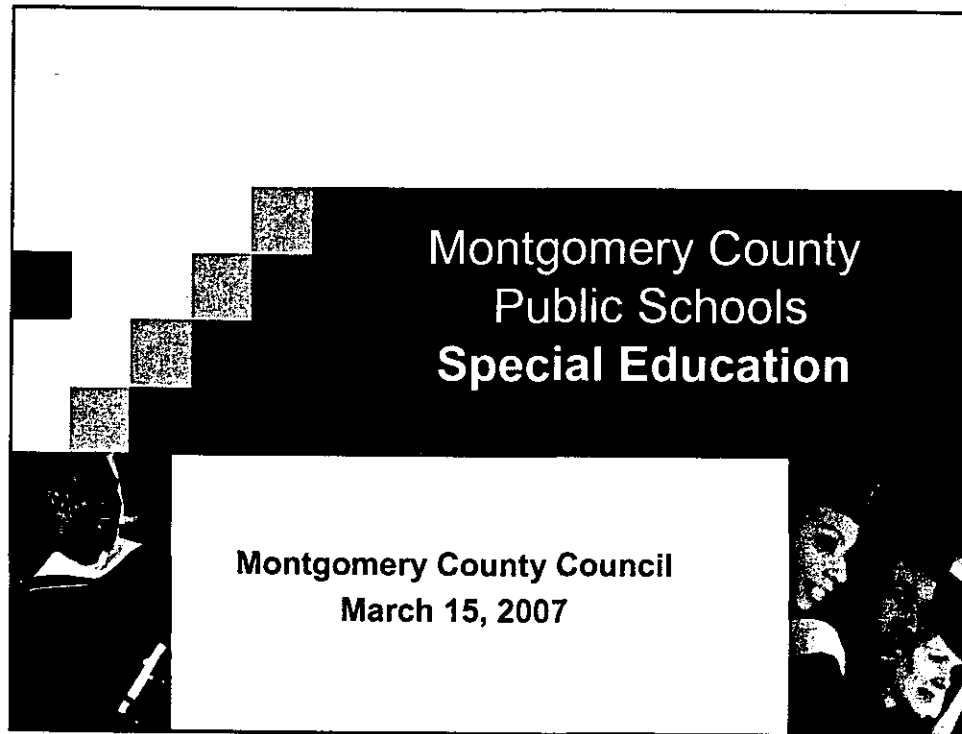
As students in a secondary learning center are supported through a team approach, so are students receiving services through a LAD program. The strategies listed above also are used to support LAD.



**Montgomery County Public Schools  
Special Education Presentation  
March 15, 2007**

**Materials in Packet**

Attachment A	PowerPoint Presentation
Attachment B	Revised Learning Center Proposal
Attachment C	Budget Questions
Attachment D	Cost of Hours-Based Staffing
Attachment E	Description of Hours-Based Staffing Model
Attachment F	Individualized Education Program Process
Attachment G	Description of Special Education Services



Who is presenting today?

- Dr. Carol Ann Baglin, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education
- Dr. Carey M. Wright, Associate Superintendent, Office of Special Education and Student Services
- Ms. Gwendolyn J. Mason, Director, Department of Special Education Services
- Ms. Vickie Strange, Director, Department of Special Education Operations

## Why realign service delivery?

*Mandates and data drive change*

- IDEA 2004 LRE mandate
- Data drives the change
  - HSA
  - MSA
  - LRE
  - Disproportionality
- Parents want improved outcomes for their students

## What is the legal basis for the recommended plan?

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004)*

- “To the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities must be educated with children without disabilities”
- Removal is “only when ...education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved”
- Ensure that a disabled child is “educated in the school he or she would attend if not disabled” unless his or her IEP requires some other arrangement

## What needs to change?

### *Least Restrictive Environment*

#### MSDE Targets for FY2006 through FY2009

Inclusion Indicator	MCPS as of October 2005	MSDE Targets FY 2006	MSDE Targets FY 2007	MSDE Targets FY 2008	MSDE Targets FY 2009
<b>LRE A</b> (removed from regular class less than 21% of the day)	<b>57.05%</b>	$\geq 57.75\%$	$\geq 58.25\%$	$\geq 58.75\%$	$\geq 59.25\%$
<b>LRE C</b> (removed from regular class more than 60% of the day)	<b>20.66%</b>	$\leq 17.47\%$	$\leq 17.22\%$	$\leq 16.97\%$	$\leq 16.72\%$

## What needs to change?

### *Least Restrictive Environment*

#### LRE C in MCPS Secondary Schools with Learning Centers FY 2006-2007

School	School Population	Total Special Education Students	LRE C (Students with disabilities removed from regular class more than 60% of the day) MSDE 2006-2007 Target is 17.22%	
			Number	Percent
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. MS	741	120	31	26%
Col. E. Brooke Lee MS	513	126	41	33%
White Oak MS	811	137	70	51%
Montgomery Village MS	749	184	96	52%
Tilden MS	770	191	104	54%
Walter Johnson HS	1,967	272	106	39%
Watkins Mill HS	1,777	273	124	45%
John F. Kennedy HS	1,495	224	120	54%

## What needs to change?

*Student achievement on MSA and HSA*

- Achievement gap between special education and general education
- Gap widens in middle school
- HSA results have serious graduation implications

## Comparison of MCPS Students Percentage Proficient in Reading MSA 2005–2006

Percent Student Proficient/Advanced				
	2005		2006	
Grade	General Education	Special Education	General Education	Special Education
3	81.9	58.5	83.0	62.0
4	89.3	66.6	89.4	67.5
5	83.9	51.2	86.7	58.1
6	81.2	39.2	84.5	43.2
7	82.3	37.6	81.8	41.7
8	79.2	35.8	79.4	33.9

## Comparison of MCPS Students Percentage Proficient in Mathematics MSA 2005-2006

Percent Student Proficient/Advanced				
	2005		2006	
Grade	General Education	Special Education	General Education	Special Education
3	86.2	57.8	87.5	57.5
4	87.7	54.4	90.2	60.5
5	83.3	44.3	85.4	51.7
6	73.3	29.7	81.4	39.0
7	73.5	26.7	76.2	33.5
8	70.0	26.1	72.4	25.6

## May 2006 MSA Special Education Students Percent Proficient/Advanced in Middle Schools with Learning Centers

Middle School	More than 15 Hrs.	Reading		Mathematics	
		N Tested	% Proficient	N Tested	% Proficient
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	Not LC	60	18.3	61	8.2
	LC	32	0	32	0
Col. E. Brooke Lee	Not LC	46	67.4	46	65.2
	LC	52	7.7	52	5.8
Montgomery Village	Not LC	27	88.9	28	67.9
	LC	58	3.4	58	8.6
Tilden	Not LC	12	58.3	12	58.3
	LC	102	9.8	103	7.8
White Oak	Not LC	8	12.5	8	0
	LC	50	4.0	49	2.0

Comparison of MCPS Students Percent  
Passing Algebra MSA/HSA 2005–2006

	General Education			Special Education		
	All	African American	Hispanic	All	African American	Hispanic
2005	72.3	43.0	46.6	28.7	5.5	16.0
2006	82.3	60.4	62.7	45.9	25.0	29.9

Comparison of MCPS Students Percent  
Passing English MSA/HSA 2005–2006

	General Education			Special Education		
	All	African American	Hispanic	All	African American	Hispanic
2005	74.0	46.8	47.9	28.6	10.3	11.8
2006	74.2	46.6	50.1	24.7	7.0	12.3

## May 2006 HSA Percent Passing in High Schools with Learning Centers

	English	Biology	NSL	Algebra
	% Proficient	% Proficient	% Proficient	% Proficient
Special Ed Not LC More than 15 Hours	5.9	5.3	29.4	30.4
<b>Learning Center</b> More than 15 Hours	<b>2.2</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>19.7</b>

## What needs to change?

*Student participation in AP /Honors classes*

- Participation gap between special education and general education
- Students enrolled in advanced placement/honors classes are more likely to become college/workforce ready



## Percent of MCPS Students Enrolled in at Least One AP/Honors Class

	Percent Enrolled (Spring Semester)		
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
All Students	65.0	66.2	69.1
<b>Special Education</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>22.3</b>

## What needs to change?

### *Disproportionality*

MSDE finds MCPS disproportionate in:

- ☐ Identification of African American students in special education
  - ☐ With disabilities 28.2%
  - ☐ With Emotional Disabilities 41.7%
  - ☐ With Mental Retardation 41.8%
- ☐ Educating students in segregated settings
  - ☐ African American students in LRE C 37.6%
  - ☐ MCPS students in LRE C 20.7%
- ☐ High suspension and expulsion rates

**African American students in MCPS 22.8%**

Source: October 2005 MSDE Census Data

## Which students are in middle school learning centers?

*Disproportionate numbers of minority students*

Percentage of African American and Hispanic Students in Middle School Learning Centers (LRE C)			
	African American	Hispanic	Total
	%	%	%
Lee	24.4	51.2	75.6
ML King	60.0	11.4	71.4
Mont. Vil.	43.8	23.8	67.5
Tilden	33.3	22.6	55.9
White Oak	47.8	34.8	82.6
<b>Total LC</b>	40.3	27.5	67.8
<b>MCPS MS</b>	23.3	20.2	43.5

## Which students are in high school learning centers?

*Disproportionate numbers of minority students*

Percentage of African American and Hispanic Students in High School Learning Centers (LRE C)			
	African American	Hispanic	Total
	%	%	%
Kennedy	51.3	29.5	80.8
WJ	20.4	18.4	38.8
Watkins Mill	55.6	22.2	77.8
<b>Total LC</b>	43.0	22.8	65.8
<b>MCPS HS</b>	22.9	18.7	41.6

## How does change in service delivery affect student results?

*Improves student achievement*

- Increases student access to rigorous instruction
- Increases student access to a broader range of highly qualified content teachers

## How will this be implemented?

*Six year phase-in*

- 2007-2008
  - Grade 6 – 12 students
    - All may remain in learning centers through graduation
    - All have options to return to home/consortia schools based on IEP team decisions
    - No incoming grade 6 students to learning centers
  - Approximately 45 rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders from elementary learning centers
    - Rising Grade 6 students will receive services in home/consortia schools
    - Principals and staff will receive additional professional development to support students
  - There are no plans to phase out elementary learning centers

## How will this be implemented?

*Phase-in to home/consortia schools*

### ■ FY 2008 Middle School Students

- Rising 6th graders = 45 projected
- Number of students going to each middle school = 0 – 4
  - 19 schools may receive 1 or 2 students
  - 5 schools may receive 3 or 4 students
  - Fourteen schools may receive no students

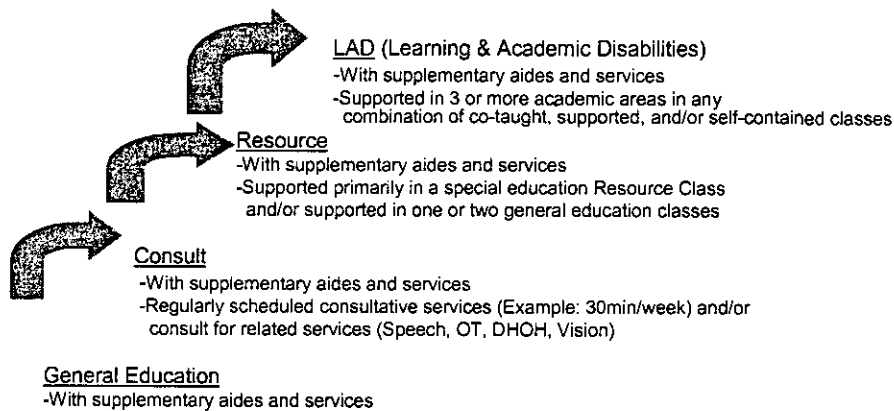
## Who are the transitioning students ?

*Projected rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders*

- **Ethnicity**
  - 60% African American and Hispanic
- **2006 MSA Scores**
  - Reading: 85% Basic and 15% Proficient
  - Mathematics: 94% Basic and 6% Proficient
- **Disability Codes**
  - 36% Speech Impairment
  - 25% Learning Disability
  - 16% Autism
  - 14% Other Health Impairment
  - 9% Mental Retardation
- **Identified Learning Needs**
  - Reading and mathematics interventions
  - Assistive technology
  - 20 - 25 hours of special education services
  - Supplementary aides and services
  - Modifications to the curriculum

## How will this be implemented?

### *Continuum of services*



## Who will support this transition?

### *Central Office Staff*

- Provide central office case management:
  - ☐ review student files
  - ☐ analyze student needs
  - ☐ observe students
  - ☐ ensure that needed materials are available
- Facilitate communication and school visits with parents
- Participate in IEP team meetings such as 30-day periodic reviews for transitioning students
- Assist with the development of master schedules
- Serve on school literacy teams, Academic Steering Committees, Instructional Councils, and monitoring teams
- Collaborate to provide professional development:
  - ☐ conduct walk-throughs
  - ☐ provide job-embedded coaching for teachers
  - ☐ support best instructional practices

## Who will support this transition?

### *School-based staff*

- ☐ Provide school-based case management
- ☐ Ensure implementation of each student IEP
- ☐ Facilitate communication with school staff
- ☐ Monitor student progress
- ☐ Arrange 30-day periodic reviews for transitioning students

## Who will support students who remain in the secondary learning centers?

### *Central office staff*

- **Provide professional development**
  - ☐ Implementation of the mathematics and English/reading curricula
  - ☐ School specific topics to improve instruction
  - ☐ Job-embedded coaching on best instructional practices
- **Implement scientifically research-based interventions**
- **Facilitate collaboration between core content and special education teachers**
- **Participate on monthly instructional team meetings**
  - ☐ Monitor and discuss student progress
  - ☐ Ensure implementation of supplementary aides and services, and modifications

## Why now?

### *Staffing supports in place*

- General education high school teachers (25)
  - To support students with disabilities
  - To reduce class size for inclusion
- LRE initiative teachers (6)
- Intensive Reading Needs teachers (18)
- Additional secondary LAD teachers (31)
- Additional secondary LAD paraeducators (27)
- High school literacy coaches (25)

## Why now?

### *Instructional supports in place*

- Scientifically Research-Based Reading Interventions
- Special Education Support
  - Best practices for co-teaching and inclusion
  - Differentiation of instruction
  - Development of academic and behavioral strategies
  - Provision of accommodations
  - Assistive technology
  - Consultation on master schedule development

## Why now?

### *Professional Development in place*

- Countywide curriculum implementation
- Summer 2007 mandatory professional development for general and special education Grade 6 co-teaching teams
- School-specific professional development for content and grade level teams
- Job-embedded coaching for individual teachers

## What professional development is currently available?

- Co-teaching Models
- Tools for Inclusion
- Implementation of Reading Interventions
- Differentiated Instruction
- Building Professional Learning Communities
- Providing Accommodations
- Assistive Technology
- Paraeducator Training
- Accessibility Planning
- Comprehensive Behavior Management Training
- Best Practices for Working with Students with Autism



## What supports in FY 2008?

- Itinerant paraeducators to support inclusion (20)
- Transition support teachers (6)
- Hours-based staffing model (10 additional middle schools)
- Reserve positions

## How will success be measured?

### *Focused data analysis*

- Data Collection Points
  - ☐ Individual student academic achievement
  - ☐ Other indicators: attendance, suspension rate, LRE and disproportionality
  - ☐ Staff and parent feedback
- Systematic Review and Analysis of Data Points
  - ☐ 30 Day Periodic Reviews
  - ☐ Monitor student achievement
  - ☐ Guide instructional decisions

## How will future challenges be met?

*Focus efforts for continuous improvement*

- Analyze procedures and practices for improvement
- Monitor student achievement
- Monitor staffing
- Utilize reserve staffing when needed
- Collaborate for school-specific professional development
- Ensure ongoing communication with stakeholders

*This is  
what we  
want for  
ALL of  
our  
students*




Office of the Superintendent of Schools  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Rockville, Maryland

January 21, 2007

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools 

Subject: Update on Revisions to Secondary Special Education Learning Center Proposal

I have attached the detailed plan describing the revised proposal on secondary special education learning centers that I summarized in a memorandum to you on Thursday. The plan demonstrates both why we need to move toward a more inclusive model of education and how we plan to get there. The revised proposal allows all current learning center students in Grades 6 through 12 to remain in the centers through graduation, if they wish. The plan also envisions that approximately 45 students currently in Grade 5 who might be candidates for learning center placements next year will receive their special education services in their home or consortia schools.

It is clear to me that we need to move to a more inclusive model of education if we are going to truly prepare students with disabilities to meet the state's graduation requirements. It is also clear to me that our initial plan to begin immediately phasing out the learning centers in the next school year caused a significant amount of concern in the community.

Special education staff has invited all learning center parents to attend one of two community meetings on Monday, January 22, 2007, at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the details of the revised proposal. The meetings will be held simultaneously at Watkins Mill and John F. Kennedy high schools.

Dr. Frieda K. Lacey, deputy superintendent of schools, and Dr. Carey Wright, associate superintendent for special education and student services, and their staff are available to answer any questions you may have about the revised proposal.

I will continue to keep you informed on this very important topic.

JDW:kmy

Attachments

Copy to:  
Executive Staff  
Principals

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SECONDARY LEARNING CENTERS  
Revised Proposal**

In December 2006, I proposed to improve the delivery of special education services through a three-year plan to close the secondary learning centers operated by the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). In response to testimony during the public hearings on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Operating Budget as well as communications from the Board of Education, parents, and the community, I directed staff to revisit the proposal. After further consideration and input from MCPS staff, including principals, I am now proposing a revised plan.

The overall goals for the revised proposal remain the same—improving the academic performance of students with disabilities, increasing the number of students with disabilities educated in the least restrictive educational environment, and addressing the overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic students in the secondary learning centers. This revised proposal moves MCPS towards a more inclusive model of special education services aligned with best practices and legal requirements, but it does so at a slower and more deliberate pace, thus minimizing disruptions to the educational experiences of current secondary learning center students.

The revised proposal for the 2007–2008 school year includes the following five key elements:

- 1) All current Grades 6–12 students may remain in the secondary learning centers through their graduation.
- 2) Approximately 45 rising Grade 6 students who might be candidates for the secondary learning centers will receive their special education services in their home or consortia schools, according to their Individualized Education Program (IEPs). The progress of these students will be carefully monitored to ensure that they are progressing in accordance with their IEPs.
- 3) All of the current students in secondary learning centers will have the option of returning to their home or consortia schools to receive services if their families request it, and students who wish to exercise this option will be supported.
- 4) Additional efforts will be made to improve the quality of instruction at the secondary learning centers for the students who remain through their high school graduation.
- 5) Principals and staff will receive additional professional development to help them better support students with disabilities in their home and consortia schools.

As is clear from these key features, the major change from the original proposal is that the revised plan will be implemented gradually. Although the original proposal had support from

some parents and special education advocates, feedback from other parents, advocates, and community members demonstrated that there are varying levels of readiness for changes to the secondary learning centers. The gradual nature of the revised proposal provides an extended opportunity to build our capacity to serve the needs of students who are transitioning from the secondary learning centers. It permits MCPS ample time for the following: outreach to the parent community, expansion of scientifically research-based interventions, comprehensive professional development systemwide and at individual schools, and identification and allocation of instructional material and assistive technology supports. Furthermore, a slow and deliberate implementation process will allow sufficient opportunity for monitoring and evaluation by the Department of Shared Accountability (DSA) to ensure that the revised proposal is improving student outcomes.

The revised proposal, detailed more fully below and in the attached Implementation Plan (Attachment A), is designed to increase academic achievement for *all* students with disabilities --whether they continue to receive special education services in secondary learning centers or whether they transition to home and consortia schools where they will have increased access to more inclusive educational settings.

Even though I am recommending that the plan be implemented gradually, as explained in Section II below, there are significant educational and legal reasons why we must proceed in moving students in the secondary learning centers to their home or consortia schools.

### **I. Background on MCPS Secondary Learning Centers**

Since the 1970s, MCPS has operated secondary learning centers. These learning centers have provided special education services to students with disabilities in self-contained settings (i.e., educational environments in which they are isolated from their nondisabled peers). Presently, there are five middle school learning centers located within Montgomery Village, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Col. E. Brooke Lee, White Oak, and Tilden middle schools. There also are three high school learning centers located within Watkins Mill, John F. Kennedy, and Walter Johnson high schools. In schools with secondary learning centers, some students with disabilities receive special education services in learning center classes. Others receive services in general education classes.

As of December 1, 2006, there were 295 students in the middle school learning centers and 316 high school learning center students. These learning center students have a wide variety of skills and abilities. They are generally three years below grade level in reading and typically demonstrate some deficits in the skill areas of decoding, word retrieval, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, written language, and organization. In mathematics, many demonstrate some deficits in the skill areas of calculation and problem solving. Overall, however, these learning center students' reading and math IEP goals are not significantly different from those of their disabled peers who currently receive services in home or consortia schools.

## II. Rationale for Improving the Delivery of Special Education Services

There are a number of compelling reasons for phasing out the secondary learning centers. These reasons include the following: the academic performance of secondary learning center students lags far behind their disabled peers who are not in learning centers, African American and Hispanic students are overrepresented in secondary learning centers, and the high concentrations of students with disabilities in schools with secondary learning centers makes it difficult for MCPS to provide these students with inclusive educational opportunities. Each of these reasons is discussed below.

### **(A) The academic performance of secondary learning center students lags far behind their disabled peers who are not in learning centers.**

Data across a variety of indicators show that secondary learning centers are not producing positive educational outcomes for all students.

Examples of performance issues at the high school learning centers include the following:

- Generally, the performance of learning center students on the High School Assessments (HSAs) is significantly worse than that of students with disabilities not in the learning centers. (See Attachment B, Table 1.)
- More specifically, in 2006, HSA passing rates for learning center students were, on average, about 50 percent lower than for students with disabilities not in learning centers. These differences were consistent, with one exception, regardless of the students' disabilities or the hours of service they received. (See Attachment B, Tables 1-2.)
- Equally as concerning, 92.3 percent of the Class of 2009 learning center students have not met the Algebra HSA graduation requirement. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of these students have not even attempted the Algebra HSA. Thus, these students are on a trajectory that will make it very difficult to obtain a high school diploma. (See Attachment B, Table 3.)

Students in middle school learning centers face similar challenges, as shown in the following examples:

- In 2006, the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) proficiency rates of middle school learning center students were more than 50 percent lower than those of their disabled peers in the same schools. These differences were consistent regardless of students' disabilities, the restrictiveness of the learning environments in which they were placed, or the hours of service they received. (See Attachment B, Tables 4-6.)

- A comparison of performance on the 2006 MSA at Montgomery Village Middle School for students with disabilities who received more than 15 hours of special education services in the learning center and those who received comparable hours of service outside of the learning center shows that—
  - in reading, only 3.4 percent of learning center students scored proficient or higher compared to 88.9 percent of non-learning center students with disabilities; and
  - in mathematics, only 8.6 percent of learning center students scored proficient or higher compared to 67.9 percent of non-learning center students with disabilities. (See Attachment B, Table 7.)
- A comparison of the performance of learning disabled students inside and outside the learning center at Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School on the 2006 MSA provides another powerful illustration of these disparities, showing that—
  - in reading, only 3.4 percent of learning center students scored proficient or higher compared with 60.7 percent of non-learning center students with disabilities; and
  - in mathematics, not a single learning center student scored proficient or higher compared with 58.9 percent of non-learning center students with disabilities. (See Attachment B, Table 8.)

**(B) African American and Hispanic students are overrepresented in secondary learning centers.**

African American and Hispanic students are overrepresented generally among MCPS students with disabilities, but this disproportionality is pronounced in the secondary learning centers.

- At the middle school level in 2005–2006, African American and Hispanic students collectively comprised 42.6 percent of the total MCPS enrollment. By contrast, these two groups accounted for 54.3 percent of students with disabilities and, even more significantly, 67.7 percent of learning center students. (See Attachment B, Table 9.)
- At the high school level in 2005–2006, African American and Hispanic students collectively comprised 40.8 percent of the total MCPS enrollment. By contrast, these two groups accounted for 53.0 percent of students with disabilities and, even more significantly, 65.8 percent of learning center students. (See Attachment B, Table 10.)

In schools with secondary learning centers, African American and Hispanic students represent a substantially higher percentage of the students enrolled in those centers than in the overall student population of the school. For example, at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School, the combined percentage of African American and Hispanic learning center students exceeds the

combined percentage of these two student groups in the general school population by 26.4 percentage points. (See Attachment B, Table 9.) The overrepresentation of African Americans and Hispanic students is of particular concern in light of the data on underperformance in the secondary learning centers.

Significantly, federal law requires MCPS to address racial or ethnic disproportionality and discrimination affecting students with disabilities. For example, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* (IDEA) requires states and local school districts to have procedures in place to prevent students of particular races and ethnicities from being disproportionately identified as students with disabilities or placed in particular educational settings, such as self-contained secondary learning centers.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of monitoring MCPS for compliance with this IDEA provision, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) concluded in 2004 that the school system was “significantly disproportionate” based on its analysis of student data showing that African Americans were overidentified as students with disabilities, overrepresented in self-contained and restrictive learning environments, such as the secondary learning centers, and overrepresented among students subjected to disciplinary actions. As a result, MSDE required MCPS to reserve more than \$3.8 million of the federal funds it received for special education to “provide comprehensive coordinated Early Intervening Services” to prevent African Americans from being disproportionately overidentified as students with disabilities. (See Attachment C.) In addition, MCPS was mandated to reexamine and revise all policies, procedures, and practices that contribute to these disproportionalities, including the secondary learning centers.

The overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic students in secondary learning centers also raises possible concerns under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI). Title VI prohibits discrimination by school districts receiving federal funds.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has authority to undertake compliance reviews and investigate complaints from individuals about possible Title VI violations. In the past decade, OCR has stepped up enforcement activity to deter the misidentification and unjustifiable overrepresentation of students of certain races and ethnicities in special education, as well as their disproportionate placement in overly restrictive settings.<sup>3</sup>

**(C) The high concentrations of students with disabilities in schools with secondary learning centers makes it difficult for MCPS to provide these students with inclusive educational opportunities.**

MCPS schools with secondary learning centers have significant concentrations of students with disabilities, both within those centers and in the general student population. For the 2006–2007 school year, students with disabilities comprised, on average, over 21 percent of the entire

<sup>1</sup> See 20 U.S.C. §§ 1412(a)(24), 1418(d) (2005); 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.173, 300.646.

<sup>2</sup> See 42 U.S.C. § 2000d *et seq.* (2005).

<sup>3</sup> See U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, ANNUAL REPORTS TO CONGRESS (1995-2005).



student enrollment in middle schools that have learning centers. By comparison, students with disabilities represent less than 13 percent of the overall MCPS middle school enrollment. In high schools that have learning centers, students with disabilities comprised, on average, approximately 15 percent of the entire student population. By comparison, students with disabilities represented less than 11 percent of the overall MCPS high school population. (See Attachment B, Table 11.)

The high concentration of students with disabilities is particularly a problem at the following three middle schools with learning centers: Col E. Brooke Lee, Montgomery Village, and Tilden. Each of these schools has an enrollment that is approximately 25 percent special education, making it difficult to educate students in inclusive settings. (See Attachment B, Table 11.)

In light of these high concentrations of students with disabilities in schools with secondary learning centers, it is challenging for MCPS to provide students with inclusive educational opportunities consistent with best practices and federal law. IDEA mandates that "[t]o the maximum extent appropriate" children with disabilities must be "educated with children who are not disabled." Moreover, assignments to "special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment" should occur "only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily."<sup>4</sup> In addition to this "least restrictive environment" (LRE) mandate, IDEA regulations require that school districts must ensure that a child with disabilities is "educated in the school he or she would attend if nondisabled" unless his or her IEP requires some other arrangement.<sup>5</sup>

These LRE requirements have been the focus of lawsuits in other school districts:

- For instance, parents of children in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) filed a complaint alleging that the district had a practice and policy of unnecessarily educating children with disabilities separately from their nondisabled peers and unnecessarily excluding them from the schools they would attend if they were not disabled. A settlement agreement resolving this lawsuit mandates that CPS increase the number of students with disabilities attending their home schools and participating in general education with appropriate support. CPS also is required to ensure that the percentage of students with disabilities in each school reflects the percentage of those students in the district as a whole.
- Similarly, a class action lawsuit filed against the Pennsylvania Department of Education resulted in a court-approved settlement agreement mandating specific procedures to ensure that students with disabilities would not be improperly removed from general education classroom settings.

<sup>4</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5)(A) (2005). See also 34 C.F.R. § 300.114(a)(2).

<sup>5</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 300.116(c).

- The Los Angeles Unified School District also is subject to a special education consent decree requiring significant increases in the percentages of students with disabilities who must be educated in inclusive settings and at their home schools rather than in a special education center or other segregated placements.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) has authority to monitor compliance with the LRE mandates and the state of Maryland is currently under such monitoring. As a result of the monitoring, the USDE found that Maryland has one of the worst overall records in terms of compliance with the federal LRE mandates. In 2006 it “conditionally approved” Maryland’s eligibility for federal grant awards in part because of the state’s failure to “ensure that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from regular educational environments occurs only if the nature or the severity of the disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.”<sup>6</sup>

As a result of the conditional approval, MSDE is monitoring MCPS for compliance with the federal LRE mandate. Based on 2005–2006 data, MCPS ranks 21 out of 24 jurisdictions in the state with regard to the provision of special education services in inclusive settings. For the 2006–2007 school year, MSDE has mandated that no more than 17.22 percent of students with disabilities should be educated in self-contained special education classes for the majority of the day. Schools with secondary learning centers have among the worst records in MCPS when it comes to meeting this target. The percentage of students educated in self-contained special education classes for the majority of the day ranges from 26 to 54 percent in middle schools with learning centers and from 39 to 54 percent in high schools with learning centers. (See Attachment B, Table 12.) By contrast, other school districts in Maryland and across the nation appear to have made more progress in meeting LRE requirements.

Phasing out the secondary learning centers also aligns with the MCPS Board of Education Policy IOB, *Education of Students with Disabilities*, which was adopted in July 2006. This policy is based on the principle that MCPS should provide a continuum of services that ensures students with disabilities are educated in the LRE, considering first the student’s home or consortia school. In addition, the policy states that all staff members, including special and general education teachers, share accountability for the education of students with disabilities. MCPS has aligned its strategic plan, *Our Call to Action: Pursuit of Excellence*, with these principles by focusing efforts on ensuring accountability for the success of every student, including those with disabilities.

Best practices for educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings, such as co-teaching, have begun to show results in Maryland. For example, an analysis was recently conducted in several Howard County schools to determine the impact of Algebra 1 intervention classes co-

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Nancy Grasmick, Superintendent, Maryland State Department of Education, from Alexa Posny, Director, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education (July 3, 2006), at 1, and Enclosure D, at 1.

provide assistance with the development of a master schedule for each school, to ensure that students are scheduled appropriately and that the schedule builds in planning and collaboration opportunities for general and special education teachers.

- The first step in the transition process will be a comprehensive review of each student's confidential file, including the student's IEP, test results, and other academic indicators.
- MCPS staff members have a template that will provide an accessible summary of each student's educational strengths and needs. The information that will be included on the template will facilitate the development of a schedule which, consistent with the transitioning student's IEP, will provide access to the general education curriculum and opportunities for small group instruction by highly qualified, content-certified teachers. In addition, the school team will take other appropriate steps, as necessary, to ensure a successful transition process, such as conducting reading and math interventions, setting up highly-structured systems to monitor assignments and homework, using assistive technology to enhance written expression, providing social skills support, and implementing multi-modal instructional strategies to improve long-term retention of concepts and information. Overall, the school team will emphasize the need to maintain a safe and supportive environment for these transitioning students.

Monitoring and evaluation also are important aspects of the revised proposal. Central office special education supervisors and instructional specialists will participate in school-based committees that monitor the performance and achievement of transitioning students in their home and consortia schools. Central office staff also will observe the students in their new educational environments, facilitate periodic and annual reviews to discuss students' instructional programming needs and progress, and monitor instructional practices and strategies provided through professional development. Findings from this analysis will be used to modify how services are delivered, if necessary.

- 3) *All of the current students in secondary learning centers will have the option of returning to their home or consortia schools to receive services if their families request it, and students who wish to exercise this option will be supported.*

Although no students currently attending a secondary learning center will be required to return to their home or consortia school, this option will be available to families if they choose to take advantage of it. Special education supervisors will work closely with learning center students and their families to identify those who may want to transition to their home middle or high school before graduation. Because it is critical to ensure a successful transition for any learning center student who chooses to return to his or her home or consortia school, MCPS will use the same strategies and provide the same array of support services and monitoring for rising Grades 7-12 students who choose this option as it will offer to rising Grade 6 students.

taught by special education teachers and highly qualified, content-certified general education teachers. In schools participating in the initiative, the pass rates on the 2006 Algebra HSA for students with disabilities in the co-taught classes ranged from 50.0 to 66.6 percent. By contrast, the overall pass rates in these schools for students with disabilities ranged from 26.9 to 41.9 percent.

Experiences within MCPS also support the benefits of providing special education services in inclusive settings. Several schools have adopted inclusive practices and their staff has participated in professional development activities supporting these practices. These schools have demonstrated the ability to provide students with disabilities access to rigorous, high quality instruction in the general education environment. For example, in 2004 only 15.4 percent of students with disabilities at Sherwood High School passed the Algebra HSA. In contrast, 59.7 percent of the general education students at Sherwood passed this HSA. After staff participated in professional development on inclusive practices, this disparity was substantially reduced: 57.5 percent of Sherwood students with disabilities passed the 2006 Algebra HSA compared to 63.1 percent of the general student population.

For all of these reasons discussed above, we are committed to phasing out the middle school and high school learning centers. MCPS intends to move away from the outdated service delivery model of the 1970s in which students with disabilities were educated in separate, self-contained programs. This revised proposal provides a more inclusive model that will be implemented in a fashion consistent with best practices.

### **III. Implementation of the Revised Proposal**

As a school system, we are committed to preparing students with disabilities to meet the high school graduation requirements, which, beginning with the Class of 2009, include passing four HSAs. Based on our analysis of the available data, research, and legal requirements, we believe that a key ingredient for academic success for students with disabilities is increased access to the general education classroom and teachers who are experts in their content areas.

Because the data and research are so compelling, MCPS staff originally proposed an immediate realignment of the secondary learning centers beginning in the FY 2008 budget. Staff conducted a thorough analysis of the profiles of students currently attending the elementary learning centers, the instructional and staffing resources available in each home or consortia school, and the professional development needs of the general and special education teachers in those schools. Although the need for change remains urgent, this revised proposal addresses concerns from the Board of Education and the community about the impact this transition will have upon students, parents, and teachers.

Communication between parents and MCPS staff will be critical to the successful implementation of this revised proposal. Accordingly, MCPS will hold parent outreach meetings to explain the features of the proposal to parents of secondary learning center students.

There are five key elements of the revised proposal.

- 1) *All current Grades 6—12 students may remain in the secondary learning centers through their graduation.*

No student presently enrolled in a secondary learning center will be compelled to leave that learning center. Rather, all current Grades 6–12 students will be permitted to remain at those centers through high school graduation. Thus, the revised plan will minimize disruptions to the educational experiences of students currently attending secondary learning centers.

- 2) *Approximately 45 rising Grade 6 students who might be candidates for the secondary learning centers will receive their special education services in their home or consortia schools, according to their IEPs. These students' progress will be carefully monitored to ensure that they are progressing in accordance with their IEPs.*

There are approximately 45 rising Grade 6 students who are currently receiving special education services in elementary learning centers and who are potential candidates for the middle school learning centers for the 2007–2008 school year. Under the revised proposal, these students will receive appropriate special education services according to their IEPs in their home or consortia middle schools rather than in learning centers.

The disabilities represented among this group of transitioning students are not different from those facing students who presently receive special education services in their home and consortia schools. This group of approximately 45 rising Grade 6 students includes 36.4 percent who are speech/language impaired, 25 percent who have a specific learning disability, 15.9 percent who are autistic, 13.6 percent who have been designated “other health impaired,” and 9.1 percent who have been diagnosed with mental retardation.

This pool of candidates potentially would attend approximately 24 different middle schools in the 2007–2008 school year, with no school receiving more than four of the students. Because of the number of middle schools involved, the revised proposal will help to reduce the disproportionate concentrations of students with disabilities at middle schools that currently have learning centers.

The school-based case manager will monitor and track the student's progress, set up 30-day IEP reviews, and facilitate communication between parents, school-based personnel, and central office staff. A central office special education instructional specialist will assist in each transitioning student's case management and will serve as a central office point person throughout the 2007–2008 school year. The central office point person also will serve, as appropriate, on school-based literacy teams, Achievement Steering Committees, Instructional Councils, and monitoring teams. Central office staff also will

The revised proposal will provide a variety of increased benefits to rising Grades 7-12 learning center students who choose to receive special education services in their home or consortia schools in the 2007-2008 school year. For instance, the revised proposal will result in a reduction in the concentrations of students with disabilities in schools with secondary learning centers and provide students an opportunity to attend a school—whether it is the secondary learning center or their home or consortia school—where there will be a lower concentration of students with disabilities. This will increase the ability of every school to provide students with disabilities access to integrated educational experiences in the least restrictive environment.

Secondary learning center students who choose to return to their home or consortia schools also will have increased access to instruction by a wide array of highly qualified, content-certified teachers. This will promote improved instructional outcomes in alignment with the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), 20 U.S.C. § 6319(a)(2).

- 4) *Additional efforts will be made to improve the quality of instruction at the secondary learning centers for the students who remain through their high school graduation.*

MCPS is committed to improving the academic outcomes of those students who choose to continue receiving special education services in secondary learning centers through high school graduation. As a result, MCPS will implement a number of strategies. These will include collaboration among the MCPS Department of Special Education Services (DSES), Office of School Performance (OSP), Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs (OCIP), and Office of Organizational Development (OOD) to improve the quality of instructional practices in these learning centers through on-site professional development. For example, they will provide job-embedded coaching—a strategy that involves observing and guiding individual teachers in the implementation and delivery of academic instruction and supportive services.

A primary objective will be to increase the percentage of secondary learning center students who participate in the general education classroom. DSES also will collaborate with OCIP and OSP to recommend the expansion of scientifically research-based reading interventions in secondary learning centers.

- 5) *Principals and staff will receive additional professional development to help them better support students with disabilities in their home and consortia schools.*

MCPS will implement countywide and on-site professional development activities for principals and general and special education teachers to support students transitioning from learning centers to their home and consortia schools. Special education supervisors and instructional specialists will collaborate with OOD to provide professional development and job-embedded coaching for all Grade 6 general and special education teachers responsible for serving students with disabilities in core content areas. They will

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most

also conduct "walk-throughs" during the school year to observe the implementation of inclusive practices and look for evidence that the students are making progress toward the attainment of the course expectations. In addition, on-site professional development will be provided for other staff, on a school-specific basis, to support the instructional needs of transitioning students.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

My recommendation is based on significant educational and legal reasons why we must proceed in moving students in the secondary learning centers to their home or consortia schools. As a system, MCPS believes that greater inclusion in the general education environment will better prepare students with disabilities to meet state graduation requirements. This revised proposal allows us to continue our efforts to move toward a more inclusive model of education.

MCPS is committed to helping each student achieve academic success, whether he or she remains in a secondary learning center or receive services in his or her home school. This revised proposal ensures that the resources, training, intervention, and supports will be in place to effectively deliver services to students who will be educated in their home schools as we phase out the learning center model over the next six years.

There will be no disruption to the educational experience of those current students who wish to remain in the learning center through graduation. On the contrary, MCPS will work to improve the instructional practices and interventions to bolster student performance in the secondary learning centers.

In addition to improving student outcomes, MCPS also is committed to improving the relationship with parents and community members. For students to be successful, MCPS and parents must work together to do what is right for each child.

Index of Attachments

- Attachment A: Implementation Plan for the Transition of Secondary Learning Centers to Home/Consortia Comprehensive Secondary Schools
- Attachment B: Student Data Tables
- Attachment C: Letter from Carol Ann Baglin, Assistant State Superintendent, Maryland State Department of Education, to Patricia Kelly, [Former] Acting Director of Special Education, Montgomery County Public Schools (June 3, 2005)



**ATTACHMENT A**  
**Ms. Gwendolyn J. Mason, Director**  
**Department of Special Education Services**  
**Office of Special Education and Students Services**

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO  
HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
January 2007	<p>Review the plan designed to support the middle schools to ensure that ongoing monitoring of student performance and achievement and the implementation of appropriate instructional services are provided. This plan, which is consistent with the current practices of the DSBSES, consists of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job-embedded coaching for the implementation of reading interventions</li> <li>• Staff development on best practices of co-teaching</li> <li>• Participation on Achievement Steering Committees (ASC) and school-based Literacy Teams, Instructional Councils, and data monitoring teams</li> <li>• Monthly meetings held with designated staff to discuss the instructional supports needed during the 2007–2008 school year</li> </ul>	Special Education Supervisors, Reading Instructional Specialists, Itinerant Resource Teachers (LRE facilitators), and Special Education Instructional Specialists	Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, Division of School-Based Special Education Services (DSBSES)

Attachment A

# **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
January 2007	Conduct a meeting regarding implications for staffing in January 2007	Ms. Susan Marks, Associate Superintendent, Office of Human Resources (OHR); Ms. Jane Woodburn, Director, Department of Recruitment and Staffing (DRS); Ms. Rae Korade, Human Resources Coordinator, DRS; Ms. Linda Kimmel-Johnson, Special Education Staffing Specialist, DRS; Mr. Duane Merson, Staffing Analyst, DRS; Ms. Merle Cutitta, SEIU 500 President	Ms. Gwendolyn J. Mason, Director, Department of Special Education Services (DSES); Ms. Vickie Strang-Moscato, Director, Department of Special Education Operations (DSEO)
January 2007	Meet to discuss the proposal to provide special education services in the home schools and the implications for professional development	Ms. Betty Collins, Director, Staff Development Initiatives, Office of Organizational Development (OOD); Mr. Carl Baskerville, Director, Curriculum Training and Development, OOD	Ms. Gwendolyn J. Mason, Director, DSES; Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES
January 2007	Verify the list of learning center students projected to enter Grade 6 during the 2007-2008 school year	Elementary and Middle School Special Education Coordinators	Special Education Supervisors/ Instructional Specialists; Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES; Ms. Karen Kosian, Data Systems Specialist, DSEO

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO  
HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
January 2007	Consult with school-based staff on the development of the master schedule for the 2007-2008 school year to ensure the implementation of a continuum of services	Resource Teachers in Special Education (RTSEs), Counselors, School-based Administrators, School Schedulers	Special Education Supervisors/ Instructional Specialists
January 2007	Advise principals and student services staff to ensure that parents of learning center students receive information regarding the upcoming school year activities for all transitioning students	Principals, Counselors	Mr. Steve Zagami, Director, Department of Student Services (DSS); Mr. Kent Weaver, Supervisor, School Counseling Services, DSS
January 2007	Notify OHR to share information about the proposed phase out of the of Secondary Learning Centers and the implications for staffing for the 2007-2008 school year	Ms. Susan Marks, Associate Superintendent, OHR; Ms. Jane Woodburn, Director, DRS; Ms. Rae Korade, Human Resources Specialist, DRS; Ms. Linda Kimmel-Johnson, Special Education Staffing Specialist, DRS; Mr. Duane Merson, Staffing Analyst, DRS	Ms. Gwendolyn J. Mason, Director, DSES; Ms. Vickie Strange-Moscato, Director, DSEO

# **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
January 2007	Meet to discuss the proposed phase out of the Secondary Learning Centers and the implications for instruction	Ms. Betsy Brown, Director, Department of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI); Ms. Janice Faden, Director, Elementary School Instruction and Achievement; Ms. Linda Ferrell, Director, Middle School Instruction and Achievement; Ms. Carol Blum, Director, High School Instruction and Achievement	Ms. Gwendolyn J. Mason, Director, DSES; Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES
January 2007	Meet to discuss the proposed phase out of the Secondary Learning Centers and the implications for the Department of Transportation	Mr. John Matthews, Director, Department of Transportation; Ms. Katrina Wright, Supervisor, Special Education Transportation	Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES
Beginning in January 2007	Review the files and observe the learning center special education students in Grade 5 to identify their specific instructional programming needs in the area(s) of reading and/or mathematics	Grade 5 Learning Center Students	Ms. Lisa Heck, Ms. Diane Rosenfeld and Ms. Genevieve Goodman—Itinerant Resource Teachers (IRTs), DSBSES
Beginning in January 2007	Conduct monthly meetings regarding the status of the transition of students focusing on the instructional and program supports needed	Middle school principals impacted by the transition of learning center students	Special Education Supervisors/ Instructional Specialists

# **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
January 17, 2007	Provide an overview of information and discuss the transition of students from Secondary Learning Centers to neighborhood schools; roles, responsibilities of staff; strategies for supporting students and staff	All Secondary RTSEs	Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES; Special Education Supervisors, DSBSES
January 17, 2007	Meet with itinerant resource teachers, RTSEs, special education supervisors, and special education instructional specialists to review the information collected regarding specific instructional programming needs in the area(s) of reading and/or mathematics to ensure appropriate interventions are identified for all transitioning students	Central Office and School-based Special Education Staff	Ms. Lisa Heck, Ms. Diane Rosenfeld, Ms. Genevieve Goodman, Ms. Charlene Parilla, Ms. Elena Dennis, and Ms. Jackie Hongladarom, IRTs; Ms. Jane Easton and Ms. Brenda Browne, Special Education Instructional Specialists in Reading
January 18, 2007	Provide an overview of information on the transition of students from learning centers to neighborhood schools	All Elementary Learning Center Coordinators	Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES; Special Education Supervisors, DSBSES
January-June 2007	Conduct monthly meetings as needed with the community superintendents and principals to discuss the status of the transition of learning center students to their home schools and the specific needs of individual schools	Community Superintendents, Directors of School Performance, Principals	Supervisors/Instructional Specialists and Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES

# **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
January-June 2007	Collaborate with OOD to identify professional development in the areas of inclusive practices, co-teaching and reading and mathematics interventions for all secondary schools	DSBSES Staff	Supervisors/Instructional Specialists, and Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES
February-March 2007	Facilitate parental visitation to the home schools of current learning center students in Grade 5	Parents of Learning Center Students in Grade 5	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, RTSEs/IRTs
February-March 2007	Conduct annual review meetings beginning in February. RTSEs from receiving schools and central office staff will attend the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings for rising Grade 6 students	RTSEs	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, RTSEs/IRTs
February-June 2007	Continue consultation with school-based teams to develop the master schedule to ensure the implementation of a continuum of services	RTSEs, Administrators, Counselors	Special Education Supervisors/Instructional Specialists
March-April 2007	Continue participation in IEP meetings	IEP Teams at Secondary Learning Centers	Special Education Supervisors/Instructional Specialists and/or IRTs

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**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO  
HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
April 2007	<p>Collaborate with OOD to develop the plan for professional development for general and special education teachers and paraeducators in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English/reading and/or mathematics</li> <li>• Behavior management strategies</li> <li>• Use of technology to access the curriculum</li> <li>• Universal Design for Learning (UDL)</li> <li>• Effective co-teaching strategies</li> <li>• Providing accommodations and modifications</li> <li>• Effective utilization of paraeducators</li> <li>• Effective collaboration practices</li> <li>• Training and coaching on researched-based reading/mathematics interventions</li> </ul>	Principals, RTSEs, Staff Development Teachers	<p>Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, IRT's; Ms. Betty Collins, Staff Development Initiatives, OOD; Mr. Carl Baskerville, Director, Curriculum Training and Development, OOD</p>

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO  
HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Targeted Audience</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>
May 2007	Finalize the 2007-2008 central office assignments to targeted secondary schools to monitor student performance and achievement	Central Office Staff-DSBSES	Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES; Ms. Gwendolyn J. Mason, Director, DSES
July-August 2007 August 2007-May 2008 (Provide on-site coaching and job-embedded professional development)	Conduct professional development activities in collaboration with OOD on effective co-teaching practices, reading and mathematics interventions, and behavior management strategies	General/Special Education Teachers and Paraeducators	Special Education Instructional Specialists  OOD Content Specialist in Special Education, Mathematics, and English/Reading
July-August 2007	Verify the status of the master schedule for secondary schools receiving learning center students	School-based Administrators, RTSEs	Special Education Supervisors
August 2007	Review the schedules of former learning center students to ensure appropriate programming  Conduct professional development for new assistant principals on providing a continuum of services in a comprehensive secondary school	RTSEs, Administrators, and Counselors	Special Education Supervisors/ Instructional Specialists



# **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
September 2007	Verify implementation of the master schedule	RTSEs, Counselors, Administrators	Special Education Supervisors
September 2007	Conduct on-site walk-throughs of co-taught classes to obtain teacher feedback, see how students are performing, and adjust programming as needed	General and Special Education Classes	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, and/or IRTs
September 2007 – June 2008	Participate monthly on one of the following school committees to monitor special education student performance and achievement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional Council</li> <li>• Data Chat Committee</li> <li>• Literacy Teams</li> <li>• Achievement Steering Committee</li> </ul>	Content Resource Teachers and Instructional Leadership Teams, Administrators	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, and/or IRTs
October 2007	Observe former learning center students and conduct 30-day reviews to discuss their instructional programming needs and progress	Learning Center Students and Parents, School Staff	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, and/or IRTs
November 2007	Review the report cards for all former learning center students  Review/monitor IEP progress towards goals and objectives	Learning Center Students	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, and/or IRTs

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO  
HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
December 2007	Conduct walk-throughs in co-taught classes to see how the students are performing and adjust programming as needed	General and Special Education Teachers	Central Office Special Education Staff
January 2008	Review the second quarter report cards and unit assessment data of former learning center students	Special Education Coordinators, Special and General Education Teachers	Special Education Supervisors/ Instructional Specialists
January 2008	Verify the list of learning center students projected to enter Grade 6 during the 2008-2009 school year	Elementary and Middle School Special Education Coordinators	Special Education Supervisors/ Instructional Specialists; Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES; Ms. Karen Kosian, Data Systems Specialist, DSEO
February 2008	Conduct annual review meetings beginning in February. RTSEs from receiving schools and central office staff will attend the IEP meetings for rising Grade 6 students  Participate in IEP meetings of former learning center students to determine progress and programming needs for Fiscal Year 2009	RTSEs	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, and/or IRTs

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO  
HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Targeted Audience</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>
February–March 2008	Identify the participants assigned to provide accommodations during the administration of the Maryland School Assessment (MSA)	Central Office Special Education Staff	Central Office Special Education Staff; Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES
April 2008	Review the third quarter report cards and unit assessment data for all former learning center students	RTSEs, Counselors, Administrators	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, and/or IRTs
May 2008	Collect summative data to develop the end-of-year report on the progress of former learning center students	General and Special Education Teachers	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, and/or IRTs; Dr. Heather Wilson, Instructional Specialist, DSEO; Dr. Faith S. Connolly, Director, Department of Shared Accountability (DSA)
June 2008	Review the final report cards and unit assessment data for all former learning center students	RTSEs, Counselors, Administrators	Special Education Supervisors, Instructional Specialists, and/or IRTs
August 2008	Review Spring 2008 MSA data to compare the student performance and achievement data from the Spring 2007 MSA results	School-based Staff/ Administrators, OSP	Ms. Gwendolyn Mason, Director, DSES; Ms. Ellen Schaefer, Director, DSBSES; Special Education Supervisors and Instructional Specialists; Dr. Heather Wilson, Instructional Specialist, DSEO

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION OF SECONDARY LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS TO  
HOME/CONSORTIA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Date	Activity	Targeted Audience	Person(s) Responsible
September 2008	Present final report on the progress of former learning center students	OSP, Executive Leadership Staff, Secondary Principals, Special Education Advisory Committee, Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, Special Education Advisory Continuous Improvement Committee	Dr. Carey M. Wright, AS, OSESS; Ms. Gwendolyn Mason, Director, DSES; Ms. Vickie Strange-Moscato, Director, DSEO, Dr. Heather Wilson, Instructional Specialist, DSEO; Dr. Faith S. Connolly, Director, DSA

Table 1  
 Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the  
 May 2006 HSA in High Schools with Special Education Learning Centers  
 and the Percentage Who Passed Each Content Area —  
 Disaggregated by Disability and Academic Setting

	English			Biology			Government/NSL			Algebra		
	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass
Speech Impaired												
Special Ed Not LC	9	22.2	9	66.7	10	60.0	20	50.0				
Learning Center	7	.0	8	12.5	9	.0	11	27.3				
Other Health Impaired												
Special Ed Not LC	17	47.1	16	56.3	18	61.1	15	80.0				
Learning Center	8	.0	9	33.3	9	33.3	10	40.0				
Specific Learning Disability												
Special Ed Not LC	43	32.6	47	36.2	49	61.2	45	42.2				
Learning Center	30	3.3	42	11.9	41	14.6	41	14.6				
All Other												
Special Ed Not LC	6	16.7	7	71.4	6	66.7	6	66.7				
Learning Center	n/r	n/r	6	0.0	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r				
Total												
Special Ed Not LC	75	33.4	79	46.8	83	61.4	86	52.3				
Learning Center	48	2.1	65	13.8	63	14.3	66	19.7				

n/r - fewer than 5 students

Table 2

Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the May 2006 HSA in High Schools with Special Education Learning Centers and the Percentage Who Passed Each Content Area — Disaggregated by Hours of Service and Academic Setting

		English			Biology			Government/NSL			Algebra		
		N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass	N Tested	% Pass
15 or Fewer Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	58	41.4	60	60.0	66	69.7	63	60.3	63	60.3	63	60.3
	Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	5	20.0	5	20.0	5	20.0	5	20.0
More than 15 Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	17	5.9	19	5.3	17	29.4	23	30.4	23	30.4	23	30.4
	Learning Center	45	2.2	61	13.1	58	13.8	61	19.7	61	19.7	61	19.7

n/r - fewer than 5 students

Table 3  
Algebra HSA Status For Class of 2009 (Current Grade 10) Students  
Receiving Special Education Services in High Schools with Learning Centers —  
Disaggregated by Academic Setting

			No HSA Test	Fail	Met Minimum	Pass
Walter Johnson	Not LC	N	14	4	3	29
		%	28.0%	8.0%	6.0%	58.0%
	LC	N	14	2	0	1
		%	82.4%	11.8%	.0%	5.9%
John F. Kennedy	Not LC	N	16	6	0	11
		%	48.5%	18.2%	.0%	33.3%
	LC	N	15	0	0	0
		%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Watkins Mill	Not LC	N	19	4	3	9
		%	54.3%	11.4%	8.6%	25.7%
	LC	N	44	8	1	6
		%	74.6%	13.6%	1.7%	10.2%
Total	Not LC	N	49	14	6	49
		%	41.5%	11.9%	5.1%	41.5%
	LC	N	73	10	n/r	7
		%	80.2%	11.0%	1.1%	7.7%

Table 4  
Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the  
Spring 2006 MSA in Middle Schools with Special Education Learning Centers  
and the Percentage Who Performed at the Proficient or Advanced Level —  
Disaggregated by Disability Code and Academic Setting

		Reading		Mathematics	
		N Tested	% Proficient	N Tested	% Proficient
Speech Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	55	29.1	55	23.6
	Learning Center	54	1.9	54	3.7
Other Health Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	46	45.7	46	32.6
	Learning Center	37	13.5	37	5.4
Specific Learning Disability	Special Ed Not LC	216	46.8	217	35.5
	Learning Center	160	5.0	160	5.0
Autism	Special Ed Not LC	24	87.5	24	79.2
	Learning Center	27	14.8	27	22.2
All Other	Special Ed Not LC	15	46.7	17	47.1
	Learning Center	21	4.8	21	.0

Table 5  
Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the  
Spring 2006 MSA in Middle Schools with Special Education Learning Centers  
and the Percentage Who Performed at the Proficient or Advanced Level —  
Disaggregated by Hours of Service and Academic Setting

		Reading		Mathematics	
		N Tested	% Proficient	N Tested	% Proficient
15 or Fewer Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	203	45.3	204	34.8
	Learning Center	5	20.0	5	20.0
More than 15 Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	153	48.4	155	39.4
	Learning Center	294	6.1	294	5.8



Table 6  
Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the  
Spring 2006 MSA in Middle Schools with Special Education Learning Centers  
and the Percentage Who Performed at the Proficient or Advanced Level —  
Disaggregated by Least Restrictive Environment and Academic Setting

		Reading		Mathematics	
		N Tested	% Proficient	N Tested	% Proficient
A: < 21%	Special Ed Not LC	239	47.7	242	38.0
	Learning Center	5	20.0	5	20.0
B: 21-60%	Special Ed Not LC	94	45.7	94	38.3
	Learning Center	29	17.2	29	20.7
C: > 60%	Special Ed Not LC	22	36.4	22	18.2
	Learning Center	265	4.9	265	4.2

Table 7  
Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the  
Spring 2006 MSA in Middle Schools with Special Education Learning Centers  
and the Percentage Who Performed at the Proficient or Advanced Level —  
Disaggregated by School, Hours of Service, and Academic Setting

Middle School			Reading		Mathematics	
			N Tested	% Proficient	N Tested	% Proficient
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr	15 or Fewer Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	35	42.9	36	36.1
	More than 15 Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	60	18.3	61	8.2
		Learning Center	32	.0	32	.0
Col. E. Brooke Lee	15 or Fewer Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	32	50.0	32	46.9
	More than 15 Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	46	67.4	46	65.2
		Learning Center	52	7.7	52	5.8
Montgomery Village	15 or Fewer Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	46	43.5	46	26.1
	More than 15 Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	27	88.9	28	67.9
		Learning Center	58	3.4	58	8.6
Tilden	15 or Fewer Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	44	56.8	44	45.5
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
	More than 15 Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	12	58.3	12	58.3
		Learning Center	102	9.8	103	7.8
White Oak	15 or Fewer Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	46	34.8	46	23.9
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
	More than 15 Hrs	Special Ed Not LC	8	12.5	8	.0
		Learning Center	50	4.0	49	2.0

n/r - fewer than 5 students

Table 8  
Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the  
Spring 2006 MSA in Middle Schools with Special Education Learning Centers  
and the Percentage Who Performed at the Proficient or Advanced Level —  
Disaggregated by Middle School, Disability Code, and Academic Setting

Middle School			Reading		Mathematics	
			N Tested	% Proficient	N Tested	% Proficient
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.	Speech Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	20	15.0	20	10.0
		Learning Center	10	.0	10	.0
	Other Health Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	11	54.5	11	36.4
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
	Specific Learning Disability	Special Ed Not LC	60	25.0	61	18.0
		Learning Center	15	.0	15	.0
	Autism	Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
	All Other	Special Ed Not LC	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Col. E. Brooke Lee	Speech Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
		Learning Center	9	.0	9	11.1
	Other Health Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	11	72.7	11	54.5
		Learning Center	7	28.6	7	14.3
	Specific Learning Disability	Special Ed Not LC	56	60.7	56	58.9
		Learning Center	29	3.4	29	.0
	Autism	Special Ed Not LC	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
	All Other	Special Ed Not LC	5	20.0	5	40.0
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r

n/r - fewer than 5 students

continued

Table 8 *continued*  
Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the  
Spring 2006 MSA in Middle Schools with Special Education Learning Centers  
and the Percentage Who Performed at the Proficient or Advanced Level —  
Disaggregated by Middle School, Disability Code, and Academic Setting

Middle School			Reading		Mathematics	
			N Tested	% Proficient	N Tested	% Proficient
Mont. Village	Speech Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	13	15.4	13	15.4
		Learning Center	9	0.0	9	11.1
	Other Health Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	8	37.5	8	25.0
		Learning Center	7	0.0	7	0.0
	Specific Learning Disability	Special Ed Not LC	37	67.6	37	40.5
		Learning Center	38	2.6	38	7.9
	Autism	Special Ed Not LC	10	100.0	10	80.0
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
	All Other	Special Ed Not LC	5	80.0	6	66.7
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Tilden	Speech Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	12	50.0	12	41.7
		Learning Center	20	5.0	20	.0
	Other Health Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
		Learning Center	15	20.0	15	6.7
	Specific Learning Disability	Special Ed Not LC	28	50.0	28	39.3
		Learning Center	50	10.0	51	7.8
	Autism	Special Ed Not LC	12	83.3	12	75.0
		Learning Center	17	11.8	17	17.6
	All Other	Special Ed Not LC	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
		Learning Center	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r

n/r - fewer than 5 students

continued

Table 8 *continued*  
Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services Who Took the  
Spring 2006 MSA in Middle Schools with Special Education Learning Centers  
and the Percentage Who Performed at the Proficient or Advanced Level —  
Disaggregated by Middle School, Disability Code, and Academic Setting

Middle School			Reading		Mathematics	
			N Tested	% Proficient	N Tested	% Proficient
White Oak	Speech Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	6	33.3	6	33.3
		Learning Center	6	.0	6	.0
	Other Health Impaired	Special Ed Not LC	12	16.7	12	8.3
		Learning Center	6	.0	6	.0
	Specific Learning Disability	Special Ed Not LC	35	37.1	35	20.0
		Learning Center	28	3.6	27	3.7
	Autism	Special Ed Not LC	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
		Learning Center	3	.0	3	33.3
	All Other	Special Ed Not LC	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
		Learning Center	9	11.1	9	.0

n/r - fewer than 5 students

Table 9  
Proportion of African American and Hispanic Middle School Students Enrolled in MCPS,  
Receiving Special Education Services, and Receiving Special Education Services  
in a Learning Center in 2005–2006

		African American and Hispanic Students	
		%	N
All MCPS	All Middle School Students	42.6	13,410
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	54.3	2,192
	Students in Learning Center	67.7	231
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	All Students	53.0	457
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	65.4	87
	Students in Learning Center	79.4	27
Col. E. Brooke Lee	All Students	68.2	397
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	62.7	89
	Students in Learning Center	80.3	49
Montgomery Village	All Students	69.1	513
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	62.4	106
	Students in Learning Center	74.0	54
Tilden	All Students	25.4	209
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	43.5	80
	Students in Learning Center	43.5	47
White Oak	All Students	63.5	558
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	78.7	118
	Students in Learning Center	83.1	54

Table 10  
Proportion of African American and Hispanic High School Students Enrolled in MCPS,  
Receiving Special Education Services, and Receiving Special Education Services  
in a Learning Center in 2005–2006

		African American and Hispanic Students	
		%	N
All MCPS	All High School Students	40.8	18,509
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	53.0	2,821
	Students in Learning Center	65.8	231
Walter Johnson	All Students	21.7	431
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	29.6	84
	Students in Learning Center	41.3	43
John F. Kennedy	All Students	72.6	1,077
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	80.6	183
	Students in Learning Center	78.3	54
Watkins Mill	All Students	62.1	1,269
	Students Receiving Special Education Services	67.6	192
	Students in Learning Center	75.3	134

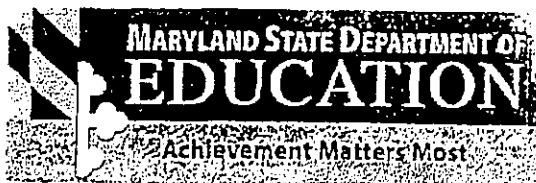
Table 11  
 Percentage of Students Receiving Special Education Services  
 in Middle and High Schools with  
 Special Education Learning Centers  
 2006-2007

	MCPS N	Spec. Ed. N	Spec. Ed. %	LC %
Middle School	30,856	3,908	12.7%	1.0%
High School	44,527	4,869	10.9%	.7%
Col. E. Brooke Lee	513	126	24.6%	8.0%
Dr. M. L. King, Jr.	741	120	16.2%	4.7%
Mont. Village	749	184	24.6%	10.7%
Tilden	770	191	24.8%	12.1%
White Oak	811	137	16.9%	5.7%
John F. Kennedy	1,495	224	15.0%	2.7%
Walter Johnson	1,967	272	13.8%	1.1%
Watkins Mill	1,767	273	15.4%	4.2%



Table 12  
 Percentage of Students with Disabilities in the Most Restrictive Environment  
 Within Schools with Secondary Learning Centers  
 FY 2006-2007

School Name	School Population	Special Ed Students Total	Students with Disabilities in General Education < 40% of the Day (LRE C). State Target is 17.22% for 2006-2007.	
			Number	Percentage
King	741	120	31	26%
Lee	513	126	41	33%
White Oak	811	137	70	51%
Montgomery Village	749	184	96	52%
Tilden	770	191	104	54%
Johnson, Walter	1967	272	106	39%
Watkins Mill HS	1777	273	124	45%
Kennedy	1495	224	120	54%



Nancy S. Grasmick  
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD

June 3, 2005

Dr. Patricia Kelly  
Acting Director of Special Education  
Montgomery County Public Schools  
850 Hungerford Drive, Room 208  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Dr. Kelly:

As you are aware, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) was signed into law on December 3, 2004 by President George W. Bush. The relevant provisions of the Act will be in effect as of July 1, 2005.

Early Intervening Services and Disproportionality/Over-identification of students with disabilities based on race and ethnicity are among the key provisions of IDEA 2004:

- Early Intervening Services may include professional development to aid in the delivery of scientifically-based academic instruction, literacy instruction, behavioral intervention, and use of instructional software to improve results for students. These services can also include provision of educational and behavioral evaluations or services, and academic supports such as scientifically-based literacy instruction for students at risk of identification under IDEA (Refer to Informational Update, Attachment A);
- Disproportionate representation of minority students in terms of identification, placement, and disciplinary removal is a complex area of study. Local school systems and the State have been working to address this issue since 1995, including entering into partnership agreements with the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (Refer to Informational Update, Attachment B).

Attached please find copies of Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Informational Updates, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Fact Sheets, and statutory side-by-side that include additional information on these topic areas, as well as the process for identifying jurisdictions as requiring and addressing disproportionality (Refer to Fact Sheet, Attachment C).

The Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services has collected and analyzed data to determine if significant disproportionality, based on race and ethnicity, is occurring in the local school systems with respect to:

- The identification of students with disabilities, including the overall rate of identification and identification with a particular impairment as defined in Section 602(3) (Refer to Identification and Placement Chart, Attachment D);
- The placement in particular educational setting of students with disabilities; and
- The incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions (Refer to Data Tables, Attachment E).

Dr. Kelly  
June 3, 2005  
Page Two

The review of the applicable federal policies and an analysis of the data (Refer to Summary/Funding Chart, Attachment F) to comply with the requirements of IDEA 2004 has been completed. Based on the data submitted to MSDE and the use of the federal formula, your school system has been determined to be significantly disproportionate. Therefore, consistent with federal direction, you are required to reserve 15% (\$3,873,713) of your federal allocation to provide comprehensive coordinated Early Intervening Services to students in groups that are significantly over-identified pursuant to Sections 618(d) and 613(f). In addition, you must publicly report on the revision of policies, practices, and procedures as described in section 618(d)(1)(A).

As mentioned previously, Early Intervening Services can involve any of the following: professional development activities for scientifically-based academic instruction, literacy instruction, behavioral intervention, and the use of instructional software. The school system may also use this portion of federal funds to provide evaluations, services, and supports for education, behavior, or literacy instruction. Early Intervening Services are also designed to ensure appropriate placements and services for all students and to reduce disproportionality in eligibility, placement and disciplinary actions for minority and limited English proficient students.

Your school system is required to set aside 15% of your Part B allocation for this purpose (Refer to Summary/Funding Chart, Attachment F). You will also have to amend your FY 2006 local application for federal funds (Refer to Budget Amendment Application, Attachment G) to reflect this adjustment and include a budget narrative detailing how the funds will be used to provide Early Intervening Services. The amendment to your local application for federal funds along with the budget narrative is due within 45 days of this correspondence.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Kimberly Lewis at (410) 767-0249. We thank you in advance for your cooperation in meeting the requirements of IDEA 2004. As additional federal regulations and policy guidance become available, we will share them with you and other key stakeholders.

Sincerely,



Carol Ann Baglin, Ed.D.  
Assistant State Superintendent  
Division of Special Education/  
Early Intervention Services

CAB:GFE:JLM

Attachments: Informational Updates A & B  
Fact Sheet C  
Identification/Placement Chart D  
Data Tables E  
Summary/Funding Chart F  
Budget Amendment Application G

c: Nancy S. Grasmick  
Jerry Dean Weast  
Kim Lewis

Brian Rice  
George Failla  
Lee Murphy

**Q.** What would it cost to allow the rising Grade 6 students to attend learning centers?

**A.** There is no additional cost to allow rising Grade 6 students to attend learning centers. The net reduction of 4.0 teachers and 3.5 paraeducators were realigned to provide teachers to support these students in their home or consortia schools. If these students attend the learning centers, the staff would remain there to support them.

**Q.** Professional development and training related to the inclusion element:

**A.** In order to prepare the general education environment for more inclusionary practices, professional development will be provided for selected core content general education teachers as well as Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD) and resource room special education teachers at all middle schools. Professional development will focus on best practices for helping special education students access the general education curriculum; effective models for co-teaching; collaboration practices; use of technology to access the curriculum; providing accommodations and modifications for English, reading, and mathematics; research-based reading and mathematics interventions; behavior management strategies; and the effective use of paraeducators to support students with disabilities.

Three days of mandatory professional development on these topics will occur during Summer 2007 as part of the overall Middle School Reform Initiative. Professional development will be provided to the following teachers to serve the students from the learning centers who will be going to their home schools in Fall 2007:

- 50 percent of the Grade 6 core content teachers at each middle school
- 30 percent of all middle school Learning and Academic Disabilities teachers and 1 resource room teacher at each middle school

<b>Per Diem Rate:</b>	<b>\$ 258.76</b>	
	<b># of Tchrs</b>	<b>3 Days</b>
Special Education	86.0	66,760
6th Grade General Education	174.0	135,073
Benefits		16,147
<b>Total:</b>	<b>260.0</b>	<b>\$217,980 *</b>

As a follow up to the mandatory professional development described above, special education supervisors and instructional specialists will monitor implementation of inclusive practices and collect evidence that students are making progress toward the attainment of course objectives throughout the school year. This information will be used to develop school-specific, on-site professional development for schools to enable staff to meet the individual needs of students. Special education supervisors and instructional specialists will collaborate with the Office of Organizational Development to provide ongoing job-embedded coaching, a strategy that involves observing and guiding individual teachers in the implementation and delivery of

academic instruction and supportive services. Additionally, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* grant funds will be used for this school-based professional development.

\* This amount was calculated using estimated Tier 1 stipend rates for FY 2008 and includes fringe.

**Q.** What would it cost to provide hours based staffing to all middle schools receiving students who would have gone to learning centers? How many schools is this?

**A.** Twenty-four middle schools will receive between one and four Grade 6 students who currently attend Grade 5 in an elementary learning center. Nine of these schools already have been identified to receive hours-based staffing for FY 2008. The cost to provide hours-based staffing at the remaining 15 schools is \$3,666,415. This cost was calculated using FY 2008 New Hire Rates as published by the Department of Management, Budget and Planning on 1/22/07 and includes fringe.

**Q.** Please identify what resources, if any, for these elements are different for the revised proposal from the original proposal (a crosswalk of sorts).

**A.** See attached chart.

Office of Special Education and Student Services  
Comparison of FY 2008 Secondary Learning Proposals

1.) **Original Proposal:**

Reduction to Staff as a Result of Returning Learning Center Students to Their Home School			Hours-Based Staffing at Ten Additional Middle Schools		
<i>From Learning Center</i>	FTEs	Amount		FTEs	Amount
Teachers	(34.00)	(2,040,206)	Teachers	22.00	1,365,122
Paraeducators	(29.75)	(959,485)	Paraeducators	26.25	896,036
Program Specialists	(3.00)	(203,094)		48.25	2,261,185
Secretaries	(2.25)	(100,229)			
	(69.00)	(3,303,014)			
<i>To LAD</i>					
Teachers	9.10	546,055			
Paraeducators	10.07	324,711			
RTSE	3.00	203,094			
	22.17	1,073,860			
<b>NET:</b>	<b>(46.83)</b>	<b>(2,229,154)</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>48.25</b>	<b>2,261,185</b>

2.) **Revised Proposal:**

The Reduction to Staff as a Result of Eliminating Sixth Grade Learning Centers:					
<i>From Learning Center</i>	FTEs	Amount			
Teachers	(5.00)	(310,255)			
Paraeducators	(4.38)	(149,345)			
	(9.375)	(459,600)			
<i>To LAD</i>					
Teachers	1.00	62,051			
Paraeducators	0.88	29,869			
	1.875	91,920			
<b>NET:</b>	<b>(7.50)</b>	<b>(367,680)</b>			

Note: All costs include fringe.

## FY 2008 Hours Based Staffing Projection

Based on Preliminary FY2008 Staffing and SEDS/Hours of Service as of 11/30/06

Middle School	Cost, including fringe		
	Teachers \$65,029	Paraeducators \$35,774	
Banneker	97,544	62,605	
Briggs-Chaney	32,515	62,605	
King	325,145	156,511	
Lee	97,544	46,935	
Montgomery Village	65,029	62,605	
Parkland	130,058	93,907	
Ridgeview	227,602	93,907	
Sligo	227,602	109,540	
Tilden	32,515	62,605	
Wood	195,087	140,842	
Total Teachers and Paraeducators	Total	\$1,430,638	\$892,060
		\$2,322,698	

\* Forest Oak and Silver Spring International currently receive hours-based staffing and will continue to receive it for FY 2008 at a cost of \$848,888.

### Hours-Based Staffing Model

In 2004–2005, a committee of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff members and key stakeholders, including parents, school-based administrators, teachers, central office staff, and community representatives, met over the course of a year to develop a plan for equitable and appropriate staffing to provide special education instruction. After examining several staffing alternatives, the committee recommended an hours-based model that provides special education staffing based on the cumulative hours of special education instruction recommended in all students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for each school. In most cases, this staffing model results in a significant increase in the special education staffing for a school. This model, in turn, allows the school staff to provide a continuum of services that addresses the population of students with more intensive needs and enables them to be educated in their home schools.

As an example, under the old staffing formula two middle schools that had a range of 43 to 44 special education students would both have received an allocation of 4 special education teachers. In contrast, using the hours-based staffing model, middle school #1 with 43 students would receive 7.5 teachers based on the cumulative number of service hours in those students' IEPs which fell within the range of 1145 to 1324 hours. However, middle school #2 with 44 students would receive 4 teachers based on the cumulative number of service hours which fell within the range of 600 to 789 hours in those students' IEPs.

Currently, Montgomery County Public Schools determines special education staffing for most programs based on the number of students who receive more than 15 hours per week of special education instruction. The hours-based staffing model was implemented in 2 middle schools in FY 2007 and is recommended for implementation in 10 additional middle schools in FY 2008.



## Individualized Education Program Team Meeting Process

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meetings are the venue in which special education decisions are made. An IEP team is responsible for:

- evaluating and identifying students with disabilities;
- developing, reviewing or revising IEPs for students with disabilities; and
- determining the placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

According to federal and state regulations, each IEP team must include:

- the parents/guardians of the student
- one general education teacher
- one special education teacher
- an MCPS representative qualified to provide or supervise special education, knowledgeable about the general education curriculum, and knowledgeable about MCPS resources
- an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results
- whenever appropriate, the student

The structure of the IEP team meeting enables the parent and staff as equal partners to make joint, informed decisions regarding the student's—

- eligibility for services
- needs and appropriate goals
- participation in the general education environment
- participation in State and district-wide assessments
- need for services to achieve the agreed-upon goals

The IEP team considers the parent's concerns and the information he/she provides regarding the student in making eligibility decisions and developing, reviewing and revising IEPs. While the parent, as a member of the IEP team, participates in the placement (program) decision, the location of the placement is an administrative decision.

IEP teams work toward consensus; however, the MCPS team must make a recommendation even if total consensus is not reached. The school system has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that screening and evaluations are properly conducted and that the IEP includes the services the student needs in order to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). When there is a disagreement, MCPS must provide the parent with written notice of the IEP team's recommended proposals or refusals regarding the student's education program prior to implementation of the IEP. The parent has the ultimate right to seek resolution of any disagreements by initiating mediation, a due process hearing, or requesting an administrative review.

## MCPS Special Education and Related Services Budget Guidelines – FY 2008

The number and type of staff incorporated into the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) special education budget is intended to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Determining the number and type of special education staff begins with a projection of the number of students by disability for the coming fiscal year. Each year, staff from the departments of Facilities Management, -Special Education Services and Special Education Operations prepares an estimate of the number of students needing services. The enrollment projections serve as a base to determine the number and type of teaching stations required to provide adequate staffing.

The location and distribution of the various special education services throughout the county also affects the number and type of service providers needed to provide free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Sometimes it is necessary to open a new special education classroom or site in a particular location in order to limit the time students would spend being transported to and from the site and their home school, or to accommodate the models of service delivery for specific disability categories in order to allow students to attend school each year in their home cluster or quad/tri-cluster. Consequently, the location of special education classrooms and services and models may require additional teaching stations.

Enrollment; class size guidelines; distribution of classes; nature of the disability; specific disability service models; time requirements for staff to fulfill indirect service responsibilities such as planning, case management, participation in meetings, and completing assessments; and legal considerations are reviewed and balanced in order to determine the number and type of staff required for each teaching station. The *FY 2008 Special Education Staffing Plan* also considers the Special Education Staffing Committee's input regarding special education staffing improvements and priorities. Below is information about the various special education instructional service models and the guidelines that are used for determining the number and type of teaching stations and specific staff required.

\* Teacher – Tchrr      Speech Pathologist – SP      Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapist –OT/PT      Teaching Station – TS

Resource Services	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
	Resource services ensure students with disabilities access to the MCPS curriculum. Students in Grades K—12 who require 15 hours or less of special education services are served through this model. These students demonstrate learning/behavioral needs that affect performance in one or more academic areas.	Available in all schools	Based on school enrollment Elementary Schools projected to have an enrollment of less than 600 students receive 1.0 resource room teacher. Schools projected to have an enrollment of greater than 600 students but less than 750 students receive 1.5 resource room teachers. Schools projected to have an enrollment of greater than 749 students receive 2.0 resource room teachers.	N/A

MCPS Special Education and Related Services – FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
Resource Services (continued)			<p><u>Middle Schools</u> Schools projected to have an enrollment of less than 801 students receive 1.0 resource room teacher. Schools projected to have an enrollment of greater than 800 students but less than 1,001 students receive 1.5 resource room teachers. Schools projected to have an enrollment of greater than 1,000 students receive 2.0 resource room teachers.</p> <p><u>High Schools</u> Schools projected to have an enrollment of less than 1,001 students receive 1.0 resource room teacher. Schools projected to have an enrollment of greater than 1,501 students receive 1.5 resource room teachers. Schools projected to have an enrollment of greater than 1,500 students receive 2.0 resource room teachers.</p>	N/A
Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD)	Students served through this model require special education services primarily as a result of a learning disability or language disability that significantly impacts academic achievement. Students typically demonstrate average to above average cognitive ability yet have processing deficits that affect performance in one or more academic areas, including but not limited to mathematics, reading, or written language. The design is based on a cluster model. Elementary cluster models provide a continuum of services up to 25 hours a week of special education instruction for students. LAD services are provided in all middle and high school programs.	<p>Elementary – Designated sites within each cluster</p> <p>Available in all secondary schools</p>	1 Tchr:TS  1 Tchr:TS	0.875  0.875

MCPS Special Education and Related Services – FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
Gifted and Talented Learning Disabled Services (GT/LD)	Students receiving GT/LD services demonstrate superior cognitive ability in at least one area and typically have production problems, particularly in the area of written expression. Organization, memory, and reading also may be impacted significantly. Most students identified as GT/LD access rigorous instruction in their home schools while receiving appropriate adaptations, accommodations, and specialized instruction. GT/LD program settings provide a combination of high-level instruction with specialized instruction and supports throughout the academic day as needed and appropriate.	Regional designated elementary, middle, and senior high schools	1 Tchr:TS	0.875
Elementary School Based Learning Center	Students served through this model require special education services primarily as a result of pervasive needs in areas such as academics, cognition, communication, organization, sensory/motor skills and/or social interaction. An Elementary School-Based Learning Center provides comprehensive special education instruction, related services, and diagnostic services to students with multiple needs and varied disabilities. The program offers a continuum of Kindergarten to Grade 5 services in several classes within an elementary school.	Designated elementary schools within each quad cluster	1 Tchr:TS	0.875
Secondary Learning Centers	Students served through this model require special education services primarily as a result of a learning or language disability that significantly impacts academic achievement. Students typically demonstrate average cognitive ability, yet have processing deficits that affect performance in one or more academic areas. In the secondary model, this program may provide self-contained classes, co-taught general education classes, and other opportunities for participation with non-disabled peers.	Regional in designated middle and senior high schools	1 Tchr:TS	0.875

MCPS Special Education and Related Services -- FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
Carl Sandburg Learning Center	Carl Sandburg is a special education school that serves students in Kindergarten through Grade 6 with multiple disabilities, including mental retardation, autism spectrum disorders, language disabilities, emotional and other learning disabilities. The program is designed for students who need a highly structured setting, small student-teacher ratio, and modification of the MCPS Program of Studies. Modification of curriculum, materials, and instructional strategies are based on individual student needs.	Separate special education day school	1 Tchr:TS	1,000
School Community Based Program (SCBP)	The School/Community-Based Program (SCBP) serves students with moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation and/or multiple disabilities. Students typically have significant needs in the areas of communication, personal management, behavior management, and socialization. The program emphasizes individualized instruction, utilizing the Fundamental Life Skills (FLS) curriculum, or a combination of the FLS curriculum and accommodated general education curricula, in regular schools and related community and work environments. The SCBP model includes the following components: (a) age-appropriate classes; (b) heterogeneous groupings; (c) peer interactions; (d) individualized instruction; and (e) transition. The goal of the program is to prepare students to transition into the world of adult living upon graduation or exit from the school system.	Designated elementary, middle, and high schools in quad-clusters	1 Tchr:TS	1,500
Rock Terrace School	Rock Terrace School provides services to students ages 12 through 21 whose learning and behavioral needs require the structure and support available in a special education facility. Primary disabilities include mental retardation or significant learning disabilities and may include autism, language disabilities, emotional disabilities, medical conditions and/or physical disabilities. Rock Terrace School is comprised of a middle school, a high school, and an upper school which implements school-to-work programs.	Separate special education day school	1 Tchr:TS	1,000
Stephen Knolls School	Stephen Knolls School serves students age 5 through 21 with severe to profound mental retardation and multiple disabilities, which often include: expressive and receptive language delays, limited motor functioning, visual and/or hearing impairments, medical or physical problems or traumatic (acquired) brain injuries. The MCPS FLS curriculum, in conjunction with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), provides the foundation for the educational programming of each child.	Separate special education day school	1 Tchr:TS	1,750

# MCPS Special Education and Related Services – FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
Longview School	Longview School serves students age 5 through 21 with severe to profound mental retardation and multiple disabilities, which often include: expressive and receptive language delays, limited motor functioning, visual and/or hearing impairments, medical or physical problems, or traumatic (acquired) brain injuries. The MCPS FLS curriculum, in conjunction with the student's IEP, provides the foundation for the educational programming of each child.	Separate special education day school	1 Tchr:TS	1,750
Crossroads	Crossroads provides services to students ages 13-18 who have mild or moderate mental retardation or multiple disabilities that includes mental retardation and/or autism. Students also have a prolonged history of aggressive, self-injurious, destructive, or disruptive behaviors that have not responded to functional and systematic behavioral interventions in less restrictive settings. Students receive instruction in functional academics, vocational, and social skills within the context of the FLS curriculum.	Separate special education day school	1 Tchr:TS	1,000
Extensions Program	The Extensions Program serves students of middle or high school age who have moderate, severe, or profound retardation, or multiple disabilities that must include mental retardation and/or autism. Students also must have a prolonged history of aggressive, self-injurious, destructive, or disruptive behaviors that have not responded to functional and systematic behavioral interventions in a less restrictive setting. Students' behavioral needs are addressed using a comprehensive functional behavioral analysis approach designed to enable students to acquire appropriate social and communicative skills within the context of the FLS curriculum.	Separate special education day school	1 Tchr:TS	2,625
Emotional Disabilities Cluster Model Programs	Students receiving services through the Emotional Disabilities Cluster Model demonstrate significant social, emotional, learning, and/or behavioral difficulties that adversely impact their success in school. The majority of students are identified with an emotional disability. Some students have secondary disabilities, such as health impairments, language disabilities, or learning disabilities. Students have average to above average cognitive abilities but may not demonstrate commensurate academic achievement due to emotional and behavioral difficulties that interfere with their ability to participate successfully in educational programs.	Designated elementary, middle, and high schools in each quad-cluster	Elementary 1 Tchr:TS Secondary 1 Tchr:TS	1,500 1,500

MCPS Special Education and Related Services – FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
<b>Bridge Program</b>	The Bridge Program serves students who demonstrate significant social, emotional, learning, and/or behavioral issues that make it difficult for them to be successful in a large school environment. Many of the students are identified as having an emotional disability or Asperger's Syndrome. Some have secondary disabilities such as health impairment, language disability, or learning disability. Comprehensive behavior management that includes proactive teaching and rehearsal of social skills as well as the use of structured and consistent reinforcement systems is used. Individualized and comprehensive behavior management strategies and systems promote students' acquisition of skills that allow them to be successful in school.	Two middle schools and two high schools serve students countywide	1 Tchr: TS	1.250
<b>Mark Twain</b>	Mark Twain Program serves students in Grades 6-12 who demonstrate social, emotional, and behavioral needs that have impacted their ability to access instruction. Mark Twain School promotes growth in the emotional, behavioral, and academic areas through three components: 1) a rigorous curriculum that enhances a student's ability to compete academically with peers in general education settings; 2) a clearly defined system of behavioral expectations and incentives that ensure improved school performance; and 3) specific social skills instruction that enables students to learn problem-solving, decision-making, and coping skills.	Separate special education day school	1 Tchr: TS	1.250

MCPS Special Education and Related Services – FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
John L. Gildner Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICA) - Rockville	RICA provides appropriate educational and treatment services to students and their families through highly-structured intensive special education with therapy integrated in a day program and/or residential treatment facility. RICA offers a fully-accredited special education school that emphasizes rigorous academic and vocational/occupational opportunities; day and residential treatment; and individual, group, family and multifamily therapy. The RICA program promotes acquisition of grade and age appropriate academic, social, and emotional skills that allow students to access the general education curriculum, meet state graduation requirements, and prepare them to become productive members of a global society.	Separate special education day school	4 Tchr:TS	1,250
Services for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders	The Autism Preschool Program provides highly intensive and individualized services for students ages 3-5. Utilization of state-of-the-art instructional practices to increase academic, language, social, and adaptive skills for students with autism is implemented to foster their development of adaptive skills to maximize independence. The autism program for school-aged students provides access to the MCPS FLS curriculum. Students receive intensive instruction in a highly-structured setting to improve communication and access to nondisabled peers. At the secondary level, students also receive vocational and community support. Students with Asperger's Syndrome receive direct instruction in the areas of coping strategies and prosocial behaviors. Access to the general education curriculum with enrichment is reinforced.	Preschool—One elementary school serves preschool children throughout the county  School Aged—Designated elementary, middle, and high schools located regionally throughout the county	1 Tchr:TS  1 Tchr:TS	3,440  1,750



# MCPS Special Education and Related Services – FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing	The goals of the deaf and hard of hearing services are to provide comprehensive educational services to students with significant hearing loss, to enable students to develop effective language and communication skills, and to provide students with equal access to the general education environment. Students with significant needs receive services in special centrally-located classes. Services are provided in three communication options—oral/aural, total communication, and cued speech. Students with less intensive needs receive services from itinerant teachers who travel to the students' neighborhood schools or other MCPS facilities. Assistive technology and consultation also are provided to students and school staff.	Resource services available throughout the county  Auditory and speech training available throughout the county  Special classes: two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school serve students throughout the county	1 Tchr: 15  1 Tchr: 15  1 Tchr: TS	N/A  N/A  0.875
Services for Students with Physical Disabilities	The goal of these services is to provide comprehensive supports to students with physical and health-related disabilities that facilitate access to the MCPS curriculum. Services address the needs of students whose physical disabilities are causing a significant impact on educational performance in the general education class. Students generally demonstrate average cognitive ability and exhibit needs in motor development and information processing. Services provided to students include special education instruction, consultation with classroom teachers, and occupational and physical therapy services. Students are integrated into the general school program as much as possible. Occupational and physical therapy services also are provided as related services to students with other educational disabilities.	Resource services available throughout the county  Special classes: two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school serve students throughout the county	34.6:1  1 Tchr: TS	N/A  1.250
Services for the Visually Impaired	The goals in providing these services are to provide comprehensive services to students with significant visual impairments, to enable students to develop effective compensatory skills, and to provide students with equal access to the general education environment. The preschool service prepares children who are blind or have low vision for entry into school. Itinerant vision teachers provide services to school-aged students in their home school or other MCPS facilities. Skills taught include visual utilization, vision efficiency, reading and writing using Braille, and the use of assistive technology. High school students requiring more intensive services receive specialized transition support and orientation and mobility training.	Resource services available throughout the county  Special class: designated elementary school serves preschoolers throughout the county	Mobility/Orientation 45:1 Resource 35:1  1 Tchr: TS	0.875

MCPS Special Education and Related Services – FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
Speech and Language Services	The goals of the speech and language services are to diagnose and remediate communication disorders, facilitate the development of compensatory skills, and enhance the development of language, vocabulary, and expressive communication skills. The type and frequency of services provided are determined by the individual student's needs. For students with less intensive needs, educational strategies are provided to the student's general education teachers and parents. Students with more intensive needs receive services individually or in small groups.	Resource services available throughout the county Preschool School-Age Private/Religious Schools  Special classes: designated elementary schools serve children throughout the county Preschool (Half-Day)	40:1.0 56.4:1 56.4:1	N/A N/A N/A
Augmentative and Alternative (AAC) Communication Classes	The AAC classrooms provide intensive support for students who are nonspeaking or have limited speech with severe intelligibility issues who are using augmentative communication devices and need to expand their use of these devices and other forms of aided communication. Emphasis is on the use of the alternative communication systems to enhance language development, vocabulary development, and expressive communication skills, and to access the general education curriculum.	Special classes located in designated elementary schools serve children throughout the county	1 Tchr:TS	1.750
Assistive Technology (InterACT) Services	Assistive technology services provide support for students from infant/toddler through age 21. The Augmentative Communication and Technology Team supports students who are nonspeaking or severely limited in verbal speech and students limited in producing written output due to physical disabilities.	Services available throughout the county	SLP – 1/75 Services Tchr – 1/190 Services OT – 1/223 Services	0.875/380 Services
Transition Services	Transition services are provided to special education students age 14 or older, to facilitate a smooth transition from school to post-school activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and/or community participation. Services are based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's strengths, preferences, and interests. Transition services are delivered through direct and/or indirect support coordinated by a transition support teacher.	Services available in secondary schools throughout the county	1.0 Tchr/TS	0.875/TS

# MCPS Special Education and Related Services – FY 2008

	Service Description	Services	Instructional Models	
			Professional Staff	Paraed
Preschool Education Program (PEP)	Montgomery County Public Schools offers a variety of preschool classes and services for children with disabilities ages 3-5. The Preschool Education Program (PEP) serves children with multiple and/or moderate disabilities that impact their ability to learn. Services range from itinerant instruction at home for medically-fragile children to consultative and itinerant services for children in community-based day care centers and preschools, to theme-based classes for children who need a comprehensive approach to their learning. Intensive needs classes serve children with severe sensory and/or communication issues. The Beginnings Classes provide services to students with severe or profound physical and/or cognitive disabilities.	PEP Classic (half-day)	1.0 Tchr/TS	0.875/TS
		Intensive Needs Speech/Language OT and PT	1.0 Tchr/TS 0.3 SP/TS 0.3 OT/PT/TS	1.000
Infants and Toddlers	Infants and toddlers services are provided to children with developmental delays from birth to age 3 using a home-based model. Services provided include special instruction, auditory and vision instruction, physical and occupational therapy, and speech and language development. Parental involvement is a major service component based on the philosophy that a parent is often a child's most effective teacher in the natural setting.	Medically Fragile Speech/Language OT and PT	1.0 Tchr/TS 0.5 SP/TS 0.3 OT/PT/TS	
		Beginning Classes Speech/Language OT and PT	1.0 Tchr/TS 0.3 SP/TS 0.6 OT/PT/TS	1.750
		Home-based for individual children		
		Infants and Toddlers Teacher	1.0 Tchr/64.0 services	
		Speech & Language	1.0 SP/64.0 services	.724
		Occupational or Physical Therapy	1.0 OT/PT/64.0 services	ParaED/ each 6
		Vision	1.0 Tchr/64.0 services	Prof. Staff
		Deaf & Hard of Hearing	1.0 Tchr/64.0 services	



**The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations**

January 26, 2007

Ms Nancy Navarro, President  
Board of Education  
Montgomery County Public Schools  
850 Hungerford Drive  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear President Navarro:

On January 23, 2007, the MCCPTA Delegate Assembly passed a motion reinforcing MCCPTA's support of the April, 2005, MCCPTA resolution which called for MCPS to offer a full continuum of special education services and placement choices with a full range of options within. This resolution is attached.

Without assurances and evidence that the initial plan to realign special education programs, including the closure and phase-out of secondary learning centers, would continue to provide such choices and a full continuum of services, MCCPTA was unable to support the original realignment plan as stated in our January 10, 2007, FY 2008 Operating Budget Testimony.

At the January Delegate Assembly, MCCPTA also voted that it does not favor the revised proposed realignment of special education services which calls for phasing out the learning centers over six years, eliminating one GT/LD program and reducing the summer program (ESY) from five days per week to four days per week.

MCCPTA is aware that Board of Education members have been keenly interested in the proposed special education realignments and we urge the Board to ensure that your future actions will be in furtherance of the goals outlined in our April, 2005, resolution.

Sincerely,

Jane de Winter  
President

**Special Education Resolution**

*Approved April 26, 2005*

Whereas MCPS has proposed a Least Restrictive Environment Placement Initiative to better address the needs of the special education population; and

Whereas this initiative is an important and necessary step but is not appropriate for responding to the needs of all children within special education; be it therefore

RESOLVED that MCCPTA urges MCPS to broaden the scope of its strategic plan for special education to provide more and various alternatives in the Least Restrictive Environment placement for those students who will not be otherwise able to derive educational benefit from an LRE placement, and be it further

RESOLVED that MCPS shall specifically broaden the continuum of services in the least restrictive environment available to students in special education by exploring and providing a full continuum of services and placement choices with a full range of options within and be it further

RESOLVED that MCCPTA urges MCPS to consider implementation of a choice based model that requires consideration of multiple alternatives so that special education students may exercise more control over their educational options.



The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

## **MCCPTA Testimony before the Board of Education on The Superintendent's Recommended FY 2008 Operating Budget January 10, 2007**

Good Evening President Navarro, Dr. Weast, and members of the Board of Education. My name is Jane de Winter; I serve as President of the Montgomery County Council of PTAs and represent parents and teachers in 199 schools across the county. On behalf of all MCCPTA members I would like to thank the BOE for this opportunity to testify before you this evening on the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2008 Operating Budget.

This budget makes significant progress towards MCCPTA priorities as outlined in our FY 2008 Operating Budget Compact and Resolution on FY 2008 Operating Budget Priorities which are attached. MCCPTA focused on seven operating budget priorities this year and I am going to briefly relate the progress this budget proposal makes on them.

There are several new items that should address our goal of **increasing secondary literacy**. These include the middle school Literacy Coaches and expansion of reading interventions. A number of the middle school report recommendations may help **close the achievement gap**. Some of these are the expanded middle school extended learning opportunities, the study skills program, Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and the Honors and Advanced Placement Identification Tool (HAPIT).

MCCPTA strongly endorses the addition of counselors at both the high school and middle school levels to address our priority to **expand after school programs and in school programs for prevention and intervention of bullying and gang activity**. The modest increase in funding for middle school activity buses is a welcome addition. Adding 10 new middle schools clearly addresses our priority to **expand the Special Education Hours based Staffing Model**. We support funding this model in all schools.

It is extremely disappointing that this budget provides no new funding to **increase the number of Parent Community Outreach Coordinators**. MCCPTA has advocated for school based bilingual staff dedicated to parent outreach for several years. It is difficult for us to continue to hear central office staff say that they don't see the value in this position.

We also find this budget makes no progress towards our goal of **safe, secure, clean, healthy, modern school facilities**. Indeed the inclusion of increased funding to keep up with the increase in emergency repairs only points out the dire consequences of failing to keep pace with necessary repairs. MCPS must address the enormous backlog of maintenance projects which we have been told currently stands at \$40-50 million.

Several items in this budget may **improve the curriculum roll out process** but there are some cuts in curriculum writing stipends that may prove counterproductive. Some positive steps are the addition of middle school content specialists, curriculum supervisors to develop math, reading, and writing assessments, benchmarks, and technology tools, and the decision to finally develop an explicit sequence of GT curriculum in the current curriculum guides.

So while this budget makes significant progress toward some of our priorities, and there are items I have not mentioned that address other goals outlined in our operating budget compact, there are deficiencies and concerns. Discussions with our clusters regarding the budget identified three themes which seem to summarize our concerns regarding the Recommended FY 2008 budget.

Are we really **meeting every student's needs**? While we understand the difference between services and programs within the context of an IEP, we are troubled that realignments and systemic changes in program delivery rather than an IEP review may determine changes in the services a child may receive. The consolidation of the GT/LD program leaves many

parents wondering why this program is under enrolled when so many have sought to have their child enrolled in this program.

As you know there is a great deal of concern regarding the realignments contained within the Department of Special Education Services. In April, 2005, MCCPTA passed a resolution resolving that MCPS should provide a full continuum of services and placement choices with a full range of options as well as provide more and various alternatives in the LRE placement for those students who will not otherwise be able to derive educational benefit from a LRE placement.

To the extent that the proposed phase-out of the Secondary Learning Centers narrows the continuum of services available and restricts the choices available to special education students, MCCPTA is unable to support these realignments. Suggestions have been made for a phasing plan based on a choice model. Indeed, many parents might voluntarily return their child to their home school if MCPS can offer an appropriate range of services in that setting.

We add our concern that these changes not be viewed a success solely based on whether they raise the number of schools making AYP, but only if they lead to increases in individual students' achievement.

Other concerns regarding these realignments lead us to encourage you to **plan before you land**. Parents remain convinced that general education secondary teachers will need additional training to support the return of secondary learning center students to their home schools and there is no provision for this in the budget, in fact the Office of Organization Development has over \$1 million in unspecified cuts. Recurrent failure to keep up with the rate of inflation in textbook costs and repeated surpluses in the textbook budget lead us to ask how can our literacy efforts succeed when so many courses, especially at the elementary level, don't even use a textbook. Parents want their students to have books. As you continue to develop the operational details of High School Plus we urge you to make sure there are good options for students from all our high schools.

And finally we ask, is MCPS truly interested in **two way communication**? Many of the parent/community engagement pieces will truly enhance MCPS's ability to communicate to parents. Expanding principal's ability to send translated information home is a positive step. There may be some value in a parent academy. The expansion of Ed line is provides parents with information to support their child's learning. However, all of these changes speak to one-way communication—that is MCPS giving information to parents. But where and how are you expanding your capacity to listen to parents who speak other languages and to fully embrace parents as partners in every school in the county? Parents frequently find themselves the sole parent representative on School Improvement Plan review committees, advisory committees, and workgroups. The decision making process involved in the special education realignments does not speak to a true partnership.

And finally, we find that MCPS has taken a great leap backwards in providing information that allows decision makers and the community to assess the costs and benefits of particular programs and initiatives. There is conflicting information regarding the staffing realignments within the budget book and we are still waiting to see the full details on the realignment of \$1.6 million to support Middle School reform. MCCPTA looks forward to another opportunity to comment on the budget when this information becomes available.

Again, we thank you for this opportunity to testify tonight and for the time and consideration you provide to our clusters to bring their kudos and concerns to you. MCCPTA looks forward to standing by your side as we work to secure the funding our children need to succeed and thrive in Montgomery County.

**Attachments:**

MCCPTA FY2008 Operating Budget Compact

MCCPTA Resolution on FY 2008 Operating Budget Priorities

MCCPTA Special Education Resolution